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THE:GOSPEL:OF
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THE GOSPEL
OF CERTAINTY

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THE GOSPEL OF CERTAINTY

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LONDON HODDER AND
STOUGHTON 27
PATERNOSTER ROW 1899

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Butler & Tanner, The Selwood Printing Works, Frome, and London.

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THE GOSPEL OF CERTAINTY

“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy ; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts : knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man : but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”—
2 Pet. i. 16-21.

THE GOSPEL OF CERTAINTY

THE greatest of current questions is this : What think ye of Jesus which is called the Christ ? It behoves every thoughtful man to address himself at once and with all earnestness to this consideration, for herein are the issues of life and death.

At this point we observe a grave difference of opinion. There are millions of people who believe in Christ as their Lord and Saviour, who regard Him as the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely, and have accordingly surrendered all their powers of body and soul to Him. There are other millions to whom He has no form nor comeliness that they should desire Him ; who reject His Messianic claims and overtures of mercy, saying, " We will not have this Man to rule over us."

It is passing strange that there should be such a divergence of opinion in a matter involving our eternal destiny. If the doctrines of the Chris-

tian religion are false, then the believers of the past have walked in a dream, they that have fallen asleep in Christ are perished, and we are but drowning men grasping at straws. Then the Church is a masterpiece of folly, history a bewildering puzzle, Christendom a blot on the map of the world, the progress of these nineteen centuries a phosphorescent gleam in the blackness of darkness, life a labyrinth without a clue, and death a plunge into an unbroken night.

But if the claims of Christianity are true, what then? All other systems are false and pernicious, for "he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned"; scepticism is blindness, indifference a fatal mistake, rejection of Christ an unpardonable sin, and a great multitude, among whom are many of our dearest friends, are fatuitously hurrying on, quickstep, to spiritual and eternal death.

In view of such considerations it should be the first business of every earnest man to determine this question, *pro* or *contra*, without delay. There is no neutral ground. Indifference is the height of folly. There are many who claim to be "honest doubters." Let them put themselves to the test, for there is a serious misapprehension here. "Doubt is either the agony of a noble soul or the

trifling of a fool." It is greatly to be feared that many who think themselves truth-seekers are self-deceived. Are they doing their best, with all aids at command, to determine the great problems of life? An honest doubter is one who, realizing the importance of the issue, rests not day or night until he arrives at truth. He puts away all pre-conceptions, and with a clear conscience and a single purpose addresses himself to the point at issue. He seeks no neutral ground. He perceives that there is only one alternative: either to receive Christ at His word—in which case he will close in with His overtures and devote his life to Him—or else to reject Him outright as a self-deluded fanatic or wilful impostor, unworthy of faith or countenance. "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him; if Baal, then follow him."

If, then, my friend, you are an honest doubter, you will weigh the evidence at once, and determine upon it. You will not be satisfied to hold judgment in suspense. You will do one thing or the other, accept Christ or reject Him. And, pending the settlement of this question, you will not sleep soundly or go about your secular tasks with a light heart; for that would be to trifle with destiny. You are standing at the crossroads: the

responsibility of choice confronts you. Cæsar at the banks of the Rubicon was under no more immediate constraint than you just now. How long did he pause? Only long enough to weigh the argument. To remain where he was meant failure; to cross would plunge the nation into civil war. He passed over, saying, "The die is cast!" Great problems do not await our convenience; to solve them without fear, delay, or vacillation, is to quit ourselves like men.

But how shall we decide? View the evidence candidly, fearlessly, and at once. The gospel appeals to reason. If the testimony offered in its support is inadequate, reject it. But go into court, and remain there until you have heard the case through, and judgment passed upon it.

In our text Peter sets forth the lines of evidence in favour of Christianity. They are three: Oral Testimony, Scripture, and Personal Experience. "A threefold cord is not quickly broken."

I. *As to Oral Testimony.* He says, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; but were eye-witnesses of His majesty." He is speaking to those who had not seen Jesus in the flesh. He himself had heard His sermons, seen His miracles, witnessed His

wonderful life. In particular, he had been with Him in the Mount of Transfiguration, had seen the garments of the Nazarene flutter aside for a moment, revealing the royal purple, and had heard a voice from heaven saying, "This is My beloved Son." This was no dream, no fable, no hallucination ; he had seen and heard it. And there were others who, as eye-witnesses, were prepared to testify as to the Divine character and mission of Christ. This sort of testimony is still offered to sustain the gospel claim. But you say, "This is mere hearsay." We answer :

(1) Such evidence has valid weight. We are all the while accepting it. How do we know that light travels at the rate of 186,000 miles a second ? We accept it on the testimony of men who have investigated the matter. How do we know that a Spanish fleet is lying at the bottom of Manila harbour ? Men who were present have told us so. How do we know that Croton water is fit to drink ? We rest on the assurance of scientists who have analyzed it. Ninety-nine per cent. of our knowledge comes by hearsay. We receive the testimony of eye-witnesses *unless there is a special reason for rejecting it.*

(2) Such evidence, in favour of Christianity, has a vast cumulative value for us. In Peter's time

there were a few witnesses who could say, "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled of the Word of Life, declare we unto you." We have the testimony of a great multitude, a procession issuing from the upper room in Jerusalem, and increasing along the centuries from hundreds to thousands, from thousands to millions—passing through the light of fagot-fires and under the shadow of dungeons and gallows-trees, declaring the testimony of Jesus and singing His praises, until they disappear amid the glory streaming from the heavenly gates. There are some hundreds of millions of people living to-day who are prepared to testify as to their personal experience in the saving power of the gospel. They all certify with one accord, "We were sinners, troubled with a certain fearful looking-for of judgment. We came to Jesus Christ for salvation, trusting to the efficacy of His blood. He said, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee!' and His peace that passeth all understanding came into our hearts. He is our present help; and as to the future, we are without fear. We have not followed cunningly devised fables. We speak from experience. We know whom we have believed, and are persuaded that He is able to keep

that which we have committed to Him until that day." It is submitted that so great a body of testimony is of overwhelming weight. To a reasonable man it must be absolutely conclusive, unless some definite rebuttal is forthcoming. No court of justice would reject it.

The only question is as to the character of the witnesses. Can their credibility be impeached? Peter and his fellow-apostles were men of humble origin but unquestioned honesty, who had everything to lose and nothing to gain by their championship of the crucified Nazarene; and with their blood they sealed their devotion to Him. The great body of believers who succeeded them did not claim to be impeccable saints, only sinners saved by grace; nevertheless they showed in their walk and conversation the sincerity of their convictions and the transforming power of the gospel. And what shall be said of those who constitute the Universal Church of to-day? Let a thousand be taken at random from any fellowship of believers, and a thousand from without; and let a just comparison be made between them. We will abide the issue. It was by such comparison that Alexander Pope, himself an unbeliever, was moved to make this historical definition, "A Christian is the highest style of man."

II. *The next line of evidence is Scripture*; of which Peter says, “We have also *a more sure word of prophecy*, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place.”

“How precious is the book divine
By inspiration given;
Bright as a lamp its doctrines shine,
To guide our souls to heaven.”

The Scriptures are here characterized by Peter as “more sure”—that is, than oral testimony. The word of eye-witnesses is corroborated by Divine revelation. This is the court of last appeal.

It is obvious that there must be somewhere a final criterion of truth. There are standards of weight and measure at Washington for the testing of every pound and yard-stick in our land. It cannot be supposed that the Heavenly Father would set His children adrift without a chart for their direction. This is the ground and rationale of the Scriptures. They were intended to be an ultimate and infallible rule of faith. And they are so received, despite all controversy, by the Universal Church. The man who rejects them is bound, in justice to himself, to find some other court of final authority, where he may seek, amid

the noise of conflicting voices, a confirmation of spiritual truth.

The apostle justifies his confidence in the Scriptures by adding that they "came not by the will of man; but holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." If this means anything, it means that the men who wrote the Scriptures did not sit down of themselves, with stylus and parchment, saying, "I will write an account of the Creation," or, "I will write the history of Israel," or, "I will write a prediction of the Messiah"; but they proceeded to their work and performed it under the direction and control of the Spirit. The figure is that of a vessel under sail. They were "moved" by the Holy Ghost as a ship is borne onward by the wind filling its canvas. They wrote what they were told to write by the Spirit of God.

Still further, the apostle says that the Scriptures so written are not "of any private interpretation." The word rendered "private" is literally "one's own." This means that no man is his own interpreter. When we speak of "the right of private judgment" with reference to Scripture, we mean to exclude all human interposition; but alas for the man who approaches revelation in the dim light of reason alone. The finite cannot grasp

the infinite. "Spiritual things are spiritually discerned." God, who gave the Scriptures, must help us to understand them. The Holy Ghost, by whom the sacred page is illuminated, opens our eyes, that we may wisely read it. The chancellor of Queen Candace, riding in his chariot, with the parchment before him, knit his brows in perplexity as he read the prophecy of Isaiah : "*He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened He not His mouth.*" Philip the evangelist, walking alongside and hearing him, asked, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" He wisely answered, "How can I, except some man shall guide me?" He was then guided by the Spirit; and the truth flashed upon him.

In order to understand the Scriptures, we must put away all preconceptions of doctrine and accept this Divine aid. In default of that, they are as if written in an unknown tongue. If we read by "our own interpretation," we read to our own undoing. When Galileo sought to convince his accusers by saying, "Look through my telescope and you shall see Jupiter's moons for yourselves," they answered, "If we did, we should have no case against you." This is why men so often see nothing in Scripture, or read only to the confirma-

tion of their errors ; they refuse the influence of the Spirit, by which the truths of Revelation would be made plain and clear before their eyes.

III. *One more line of evidence is named by Peter ; to wit, Personal Experience.* We are like wanderers in the night ; voices are heard about us, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it" ; better still, the Bible is given us as a lantern "shining in a dark place" ; but when yonder we see the light of the morning, our perplexity is over. Thus personal experience adds final confirmation to oral testimony and Scripture. Peter says we do well to listen to the word of eye-witnesses and to give heed to the lamp-light of prophecy "until the day dawn, and the day star arise *in your hearts.*"

"O taste and see that the Lord is good !" "He that hath the Son of God, hath the witness in himself." All voices, human and Divine, are ineffective until by vital appropriation we make the gospel an indwelling fact. Then we know that Jesus Christ hath power on earth to forgive sins. Then we, becoming witnesses ourselves, can testify that His love is an easement of all pain and sorrow. Then we feel His friendship is the great incentive to spiritual growth and usefulness. The truth is put beyond all peradventure when the day star arises in our hearts.

A woman came running into the city of Samaria, saying, "I went out to Jacob's well to draw water ; and a wayfarer met me who spake as never yet man spake of spiritual things ; He told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Messiah for whom we have been looking ? Come and see." They followed her back to the well and heard Him. They besought Him to be their guest and He abode with them two days ; and many believed because of His word. Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying ; for we have heard Him ourselves and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." Thus in the last reduction a man is savingly convinced only by personal experience ; when he can say, "I have met Christ, have made His acquaintance, have reasoned with Him by the way, have learned to love Him."

One thing is better, and only one—*to see Him in the brightness of His heavenly glory.* The day star itself shall fade in the high noon of heaven. Here we walk by faith ; there hope shall be lost in fruition, and faith in sight. We shall behold the King in His beauty ; and we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

A native convert in the South Sea Islands gave this testimony : "I listened to the missionary

when he spoke of sin, and he and I were like two canoes going side by side. Then he spoke of salvation, and I dropped behind—mast broken and sail blown away—while he sped on. The sea drove me on a barren coast, where I lay helpless for a time. I arose in blackness and darkness, and felt my way like one groping along a wall. Then I seemed to touch a door ; I pushed for my life ; it flew open, and I beheld my Saviour, the glory shining in His face ! ”

The fulness of revelation is before us. Meanwhile let us use the light we have, and live up to it. Let us listen to the voices of eye-witnesses, follow the gleam of the Scriptures, and heed the testimony of our hearts. Here is the secret of peace and moral earnestness. And in due time all shadows will vanish in the Sun’s glory. Our path shall be “as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”

THE WONDROUS CROSS

“ From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord : this shall not be unto Thee. But He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind Me, Satan : thou art an offence unto Me : for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”—*Matt. xvi. 21-23.*

THE WONDROUS CROSS

IN the religion of the Parsees there are two supreme beings: Ormuzd, "the Good," creator and sustainer of all things bright and helpful; and Ahriman, "the Black," who presides over the regions of darkness, evokes the malignant passions and stands sponsor for war and sorrow, disease and death. These two are perpetually arrayed against each other, the gauge of conflict being the dominion of this world. It is like a stupendous game of chess, in which wars and truces, the convulsions of nature, and the ups and downs of history, are as the moves of pawns and castles upon the board. It is impossible to say how long the game will continue, or what the issue will be, inasmuch as the contestants are coeval and coequal. Perhaps it will go on for ever.

We also believe in two great powers who contend for the sovereignty of this world, but they are not coequal. One is infinite; the other—though of immense guile and resource—is finite.

And the end is to be seen from the beginning. God is always and everywhere getting the upper hand of Satan. The world grows constantly and cumulatively better from century to century, from year to year, from day to day. Every time our old world rolls around, it rolls a little farther into the light.

“The eternal step of progress beats
To that great anthem, calm and slow,
Which God repeats.
God works in all things; all obey
His first propulsion from the night.
Wake thou and watch! The world is grey
With morning light!”

There never was a moment, from the beginning of the eternal ages, when God did not intend to save this world. All things were included in His fore-knowledge. Sin, suffering, salvation, the casting down of iniquity, and the restitution of all things in the fulness of time, were from eternity present before Him.

In one of the boldest and most picturesque portions of Scripture we are introduced into the councils of the ineffable Trinity. The three Persons are represented as in solemn conference respecting the deliverance of our sin-stricken race. The cry of the erring and perishing has come up

into Their ears. The inquiry is heard, "Whom shall We send, and who will go for Us?" The only-begotten Son offers Himself: "Here am I; send Me!" He girds Himself with omnipotence, binds upon His feet the sandals of salvation, and goes forth as a knight-errant to vindicate and rescue the children of men. When next we behold Him, He is a child, wrapped in swaddling-clothes and lying in a manger. The incarnation is the first chapter in His great undertaking, and a necessary part of it. As Anselm says in *Cur Deus Homo?*—"He must become man in order to suffer, and He must continue to be God in order that He may suffer enough for all." In thus assuming our nature He laid aside the form of His Godhood and "the glory which He had with the Father before the world was"; but He never lost sight of His beneficent purpose. He realized constantly that He had come to redeem the world by dying for it.

In one of the earliest pictures of the nativity He is represented as lying in the manger, while just above Him, on the wall of the stable, is the shadow of a cross. Holman Hunt paints Him in the carpenter's shop: the day's work is over; the spent toiler lifts His arms in an attitude of utter weariness, and the level rays of the setting sun cast upon the wall yonder again the shadow of

a cross. The suggestion is true: He was born under that shadow, and lived under it. He knew that He had come to die. He knew that, inasmuch as the penalty had been passed upon the race, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," there could be no deliverance but by death. *Mors janua vitæ.*

A company of Greeks on one occasion came, saying, "We would see Jesus." He kept them waiting while He uttered those apparently inconsequential words, "Now is My soul troubled." Why should His soul be troubled? Because He saw in those waiting Greeks the vanguard of a great multitude who were to come to Him as the fruit of the travail of His soul. At that moment He felt Himself passing under the shadow of the cross—deeper, darker than ever—to pay ransom for these seeking ones. He shrank from the bitterness of His approaching death, yet knew it to be necessary for the success of His errand: "Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? *Father, save Me from this hour?* But for this cause came I unto this hour. *Father, glorify Thy name!*" He had come to die for sinners. It must needs be. He knew that without His vicarious death the guilty race was without hope. He must give "His soul an offering for sin."

It could not be supposed, however, that Satan, the prince of this world, would suffer his power to slip away without a desperate effort to retain it. He would put forth every energy and use every means to thwart the beneficent purpose of Christ. Thus we account for those extraordinary manifestations of malignant energy during the years of Christ's ministry, known as "demonic possession." Wherever a soul was open and willing to be used, there the adversary entered in. The plans of Jesus must be overturned; He must not be permitted to ransom the world; He must not die for it.

Out in the wilderness, after the forty days of fasting, the adversary met Jesus and presented to His suffering soul the great temptation. He led Him to a high place, and with a wave of the hand, directed His thought to all the kingdoms of this world, saying, "All these are mine. I know Thy purpose: Thou art come to win this world by dying for it. Why pay so great a price? I know Thy fear and trembling—for Thou art flesh—in view of the nails, the fever, the dreadful exposure, the long agony. *Why pay so great a price?* I am the prince of this world. One act of homage, and I will abdicate! Fall down and worship me!" Never before or since has there been such a temp-

tation, so specious, so alluring. But Jesus had covenanted to die for sinners. He knew there was no other way of accomplishing salvation for them. Therefore He put away the suggestion with the word, "Get thee behind Me, Satan! I cannot be moved. I know the necessity that is laid upon Me. I know that My way to the kingdom is only by the Cross. I am therefore resolved to suffer and die for the deliverance of men."

The stress of this temptation was over; but once and again it returned, as when, after a memorable day of preaching and wonder-working, His followers proposed to lead Him to Jerusalem and place Him upon the throne of David (John vi. 15); and He "departed into a mountain alone." He could not accept the kingdom in that way.

We now come to the immediate occasion of our context. Jesus, with His disciples, was on His last journey to Jerusalem—that memorable journey of which it is written, "He set His face steadfastly" toward the Cross. He had been with His disciples now three years, but had not been able to fully reveal His mission, because they were not strong enough to bear it. A Man with friends, yet friendless, lonely in the possession of His great secret, He had longed to give them His full confidence, but dared not venture. Now, as they journeyed

southward through Cæsarea Philippi, He asked them, "Whom do men say that I am?" And they answered, "Some say John the Baptist; some, Elias; others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." And He saith, "But whom say ye that I am?" Then Peter—brave, impulsive, glorious Peter—witnessed his good confession: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The hour had come! His disciples were beginning to know Him. He would give them His full confidence. So as they journeyed toward Jerusalem He told them all—how He had come to redeem the world by bearing its penalty of death; "He began to show them how He must suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed." At that point Peter could hold his peace no longer, but began to rebuke Him, saying, "Be it far from Thee, Lord!" To suffer? To die? Nay, to reign in Messianic splendour! And Jesus turning, said unto Peter, "Get thee behind Me, Satan!"—the very words with which He had repelled the same suggestion in the wilderness. As He looked on His disciple He saw not Peter, but Satan—perceived how the adversary had for the moment taken possession, as it were, of this man's brain and conscience and lips. "Get thee behind Me, Satan; I know thee; I recognize thy crafty

suggestion ; but I am not to be turned aside from My purpose. Get thee behind Me ! Thou art an offence unto Me. Thy words are not of divine wisdom, but of human policy. Thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men ! ”

We are now ready for our proposition, which is this : *The vicarious death of Jesus is the vital centre of the whole Christian system ; and any word which contravenes it is in the nature of a satanic suggestion.* There is one truth before which all other truths whatsoever dwindle into relative insignificance—to wit, that our Lord Jesus Christ was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, that by His stripes we might be healed. The man who apprehends this by faith is saved by it.

And contrariwise, any denial of this truth is mortal heresy. The first satanic suggestion made to man was a denial of the law, when the tempter said to Adam, “ Thou shalt not surely die.” The last satanic suggestion is a denial of grace : “ It is not necessary that Christ should die for thee.” The first ruined the race, and the last will destroy any man who entertains it.

The suggestion comes in various ways, as when it is said that the gospel is not the only religion

that saves: "If a man is sincere, what difference does it make?"

'For forms of faith let canting bigots fight;
His faith cannot be wrong whose life is right.'

Here is a Confucianist bowing before his ancestral tablets; here is a Brahman bathing in his sacred river; and here an African kneeling before his fetish. All these are sincere; shall they not be saved with us?" If so, then the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of the Father, was an incomprehensible waste of divine resource, and there is no significance in the word that is written: "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

It is said again, that we are saved by the life of the Lord Jesus Christ as an example of holiness, leading us on to self-culture and character-building, and His death has practically nothing to do with our entrance into life. If that is true, then Christ did but mock our infirmity in setting up such an ideal. He did indeed come into the world to tell us how men ought to live, what a true man ought to be, what character means. That was incidental to His great redemptive mission, leading us on from deliverance to holiness. But if that were all, then

I say He mocked our infirmity. For there is not an earnest man who does not kneel down beside his bed at night, after his most strenuous effort to imitate Christ, and say, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I have sinned." We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Again, it is said that Christ did not die vicariously, under the burden of sin, taking our place before the offended law, but died as all martyrs die. "He came into the world as a reformer, to overthrow the evil conditions of things, and suffered the fate of all earnest souls. He gathered into His devoted heart the shafts of the adversary, and fell." If that be so, what is the meaning of the constant statement that the death of Jesus Christ was a voluntary death? The Father gave Him, He gave Himself, an offering for sin. "I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again ; no man taketh My life from Me."

I. *To deny this doctrine of the vicarious atonement in any of these ways or otherwise, is to set oneself athwart the whole trend of Scripture.* For from Genesis to Revelation there is a thoroughfare stained with the blood that cleanseth from sin. No sooner had man sinned than the protevangel spoke of the "Seed of the woman" suffering for sin. The first altar, reared by the closed gate of

paradise, prophesied of the slain Lamb of God. As the years passed, the prophets declared, with ever-increasing clearness and particularity, the coming sacrifice. David sang of it in his Messianic psalms. Isaiah drew the portrait of the agonizing Christ as if he had gazed on the Cross: "He is a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. . . . Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . . And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." The same truth was emphasized by Moses, Daniel, Zechariah, all the prophets down to Malachi, who, waving his torch in the twilight of the long darkness which closed the old economy, said, "The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings." Open the Book where you will, the face of Jesus, "so marred more than any man's," yet divinely beautiful, looks out upon you.

The rites and symbols of the Old Testament all find their fulfilment in Christ crucified. Their centre was the tabernacle. Enter it and observe how it is everywhere sprinkled with blood. Here is blood flowing down the brazen altar, blood on the ewer, the golden candlestick, the table of show-bread, the altar of incense; blood on the floor, the ceiling, on posts and pillars, on knobs and blossoms, everywhere. Lift the curtain and pass into the

holiest of all—but not without blood on your palms. Here is blood on the ark of the covenant, blood on the mercy-seat—blood, blood everywhere. What does it mean? Nothing, absolutely nothing, unless it declares the necessity of the Cross. It is an empty dumb-show, except as it points the worshipper to Him whose vicarious death is the only means of our salvation.

Wherefore I say, the man who denies this truth must set himself against the sum and substance of the Scriptures. For if the atoning death of Christ be taken out of that blessed Book it is, as a solution of the great problem of life, of no more value than a last year's almanac.

II. *Again, a denial of this doctrine involves a downright rejection of the philosophy of history.*

The world has been growing better ever since the Cross first cast its luminous shadow over it. Progress is a fact—a fact that must be accounted for. Hume undertook to write history without Christ, and found it a labyrinth without a clue. So did Gibbon. They saw civilization advancing through the centuries ; but, rejecting Christ, they could perceive no reason for it. The “logic of events” was nothing to them. There can, indeed, be no “philosophy of history” for a man who refuses to see Constantine’s cross in the heavens, with its

great prophecy, "*In hoc signo.*" It is a miraculous coincidence that the limits of civilization on earth to-day are coextensive with the charmed circle known as *Christendom*. "The world before Christ," says Luthardt, "was a world without love." The Church with the proclamation of Christ, and Him crucified, has come down through the centuries, like Milton's angel with the torch; and all along the way have sprung up institutions of learning and charity and righteousness. The Cross is the vital power of civilization. "All the light of sacred" and of secular story as well "gathers round its head sublime." If the world grows better, it is because Christ died for it.

III. Still further, *to deny the vital importance of the vicarious death of Jesus is to contradict the universal instinct of mankind.*

The doctrine of the redemptive power of substitutionary pain is not our exclusive property. It has, indeed, a place in all, or nearly all, the false religions. It may be dimly seen in the hammer of Thor; in the wounded foot of Brahma treading on the serpent; in the fable of Prometheus, bound to the Caucasus with a vulture at his vitals, and lamenting, "I must endure this until one of the gods shall bear it for me." It is still more evident in the institution of the sacrifice. Wherever a liv-

ing thing is slain upon the altar, it means vicarious expiation, or else it means nothing at all.

And why should it be thought strange that God should send His only-begotten Son to suffer in our stead? Is not *sympathy* the noblest as well as the commonest thing in human experience? Men are suffering everywhere and always for other men. Parents are suffering for their children. The pains which we all endure are, for the most part, not the consequence of our own acts. At this point of sympathy our nature reaches its noblest and best. We esteem above all the unselfish man who voluntarily bears the burdens of others. Should we not, then, expect something of the same sort in our Father? He made us in His likeness. The Cross is the very highest expression of sympathy in the universe. The atonement is what we should expect. It is just like God.

And it is God's exact response to the universal need. It fits our circumstances. As Coleridge said, "The gospel finds me." It answers the deepest longing of earnest souls. Dr. Chamberlain relates that among those converted by his preaching at the sacred city of Benares was a devotee who had dragged himself many miles upon his knees and elbows to bathe in the Ganges. He had at the bottom of his heart the common conviction of sin

and desire of cleansing. "If I can but reach the Ganges," he thought, "this shame and bondage and fear will be taken away." Weak and emaciated from his long pilgrimage, he dragged himself down to the river's edge, and, praying to Gunga, crept into it; then withdrawing, he lay upon the river's bank, and moaned, "The pain is still here!" At that moment he heard a voice from the shadow of a banyan-tree near by. It was the missionary telling the story of the Cross. The devotee listened, and drank it in, rose to his knees, then to his feet; then unable to restrain himself, he clapped his hands and cried, "That's what I want! That's what I want!" It is what we all want; the whole creation has from time immemorial groaned and travailed for it.

And it is our only hope. There are other religions and other philosophies, but none that suggests a rational plan of pardon for sin. I remember an old crucifix, in the public square of a Brittany village, which no one passed without bending the knee. Workmen on their way to the fields, little children going to school, all bowed before that stone figure of the Christ, which the storms of centuries had worn almost out of human semblance. The last night, as I was leaving the village in the twilight, I saw an old woman bent

almost prostrate before it. Her hands were clasped; her uplifted face bore the marks of suffering. I could not know the bitterness of that poor heart, but her eyes were turned toward the infinite Source of help and consolation. The dear Hand upon the Cross lifts every burden, heals every wound, and saves us from the penalty, the shame, and the bondage of sin.

And this is why we preach "Christ, and Him crucified." "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; . . . and with His stripes we are healed." He is thus made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. He is first, last, midst, and all in all.

THE STEPS TO THE IVORY THRONE

“And there were six steps to the throne, with a footstool of gold.”—*2 Chron. ix. 18.*

THE STEPS TO THE IVORY THRONE

THE glory of Jewish history found its consummation in the reign of Solomon. The magnificence of his establishment centred in the House of the Forest of Lebanon, and the tower before it, on which were suspended a thousand golden shields like the necklace of coins adorning an oriental bride. The brightest point of splendour in this palace was the throne. It was of ivory, overlaid with gold, and on either side were six golden lions, symbols of sovereign power. It was a great day in Israel when Solomon ascended the six steps from the golden footstool, and took his place on that magnificent throne. No fabled grandeur of the kings of Samarcand was comparable with this. It found expression in the phrase, "Solomon in all his glory."

The rabbis in their traditions loved to dwell on the transcendent beauty of this ivory throne. The Arabian legends are mellifluous in praise of it. The sacred historian himself is moved to say,

“There was not the like made in any kingdom.” Nevertheless, as Solomon was a living type of One to come, whose perfections should surpass his as the sun outshines a glowworm, so the ivory throne is a mere suggestion of one that borrows an unspeakable glory from the Christ who sits upon it—to wit, The Throne of True Manhood. The place of highest exaltation is by the side of Jesus, in the estate of regenerated and sanctified character. To be a true man, loyal to truth, reverent toward duty, high-spirited and magnanimous, with “noble thoughts seated in a soul of honour,” moved by great purposes and free from the corrupting power of sin—this is to be greater than Solomon in all his glory, this is indeed to sit on an ivory throne as younger brother of the Ideal Man.

I. As yet, however, under the dominion of sin, we stand but at *The Golden Footstool*. Here is the dignity of our fallen manhood ; we are created in the image and after the likeness of God. In every element of our tripartite being we bear the tokens of our noble birth. Our body stands erect in an imperial attitude with face toward the skies ; our minds can grasp the solemn truths of nature and the endless life ; our spirits can think our Father’s thoughts and bow the knee in worship

before Him. We have thus all the essential qualities of kingship except the crown. Something has happened. The crown prince stands at the Golden Footstool, clothed in unseemly rags, with an impotent reed in his hands.

“So fallen, so lost !
The light withdrawn which once he wore !
Of all the rare endowment, naught
Save power remains,
A fallen angel’s pride of thought,
Still strong in chains.”

Of his lost heritage he has nothing left but memory and hope. He has within him, even at his worst, a reminiscence of something lost ; the fluttering of helpless wings which Plato thought to be memorial of a pre-existent state. And his eyes are uplifted to the Ivory Throne. He knows that there are great possibilities within him. He hopes to regain his manhood. In his best moments he cries with Augustine, “Lord, Thou hast created us for Thyself, therefore our heart is restless within us, until it find its rest in Thee.”

II. And the way is provided for his restoration. There are *Six Steps leading from this Golden Footstool to the Ivory Throne.*

(1) *We must begin with an acknowledgment of*

sin. It would be superserviceable for me to say to any man that he has "sinned and come short of the glory of God," for all are conscious of it. There is not a pulse-beat, not a twinge of the nerves, not a mental process, which does not cry "Amen" to the words, "Thou art a sinner." We know and feel it. We cannot ignore or disguise it. It needs no Bible or preacher to declare it.

But there is a misapprehension here. We need a definition. What is sin? It is the fashion in many quarters to regard it as an unfortunate disease, for which we are to be rather pitied than blamed. A thief summoned before a criminal court is defended as a victim of kleptomania. An inebriate who has wittingly taken an enemy into his mouth to steal away his brains and forged upon himself the chains of habit, is defended on the plea of dipsomania. By the same token, if David were arraigned before one of our courts in the matter of Bathsheba, he would be called an erotomaniac; helpless, pitiable, and inculpable, because the fever of illicit passion had taken possession of him. Not so, however, did he regard himself; for when conscience awoke, he staggered up to his chamber on the housetop, threw himself upon his knees in an agony of penitence, and acknowledged his personal responsibility in the

cry, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight." Here then is the definition of sin: it is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, God's holy law.

Have you, my friend, formed such a conception of sin? Does it stand forth in your conscience as an act or habit of rebellion against the divine authority? If not, you have not begun to tread the stairway leading to the restoration of manhood and the favour of God.

(2) *The next step upward is in an acknowledgment of death*; that is, of the consequence of sin. For death follows sin as effect follows cause.

But what is the death that follows sin? It is the antithesis of life: "This is life eternal, to know God." It is life to be in harmony with God's purposes, to be ever in filial relation and communion with Him. And death is to be out of harmony with His purposes and to be exiled from Him. This means an eternal dethronement; never to realize the possibilities of our nature; never to attain unto manhood, which in its verity is peace with God. Exile from God! All hell—the gnawing worm, the unquenchable fire, is in the words, "Depart from Me!"

Let it not be thought, however, that death is by an arbitrary edict; it is the inevitable result

of the laws inherent in our nature. We are under the law of holiness, because we are made in the likeness of God. If a planet flies from its orbit, what shall save it from the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds? If a man transgress the law of his being, he fixes his destiny in alienation from God. His Word, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," is not an edict, but the statement of a fact which is interwoven with our being; that is, "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." His "Depart!" is but a forensic announcement of the just sentence of law.

Have you, my friend, formed this conception of sir? Do you realize that without holiness no man shall see God? Have you read clearly over the gateway of the celestial city, "There shall in no wise enter anything that worketh abomination, or maketh a lie"?

(3) *And then it is necessary that there should be an acknowledgment of impotency.* As long as a man thinks he can get himself out of this difficulty by main force, there is no hope for him. How shall he save himself from the record of the past? By penance? Nay; reason revolts at the thought of lashing one's body for the sins of his soul. By morality? It is more than we can do to keep up with our current liabilities. You cannot save your

property from going under the hammer for delinquent taxes by paying the taxes for the current year. By reformation? Hell is paved with good resolutions. He who is satisfied to turn over a new leaf is sure to find that the new leaf is much like the one before it. Do your best; yet the past unexpiated still confronts you.

The man who endeavours to save himself is like a falcon brought from its nest in the fastnesses of the hills—hooded, blindfold, and bound with a golden chain to the huntsman's hand. It can seek no quarry except at its master's will. It has wings, and eyes to gaze undazzled at the sun; but when it ventures forth, its flight is ever arrested by the golden leash.

“Rise, my soul, and stretch thy wings,
Thy better portion trace.”

Alas! we cannot, for we are held back by the leash. There is a “war in our members,” so that “the good we would, we do not, and the evil we would not, that we do.”

Have you discovered your inability? Are you weary of vain efforts at reformation? Are you moved to confess, “I cannot”? Then you are half way up.

(4) *And now to prayer.* The next step brings us

to our knees. We look unto the hills from whence cometh our help. Why is it that a man, however impious, cries "My God!" or "God have mercy!" in moments of critical danger? It is because in our deepest souls we know that in the last emergency there is no hope except from God.

It is a false pride in self-reliance that will not let us bow the pregnant hinges of the knee. It was a sinner sinking into the quicksands of his guilt, and calling on God for mercy, who sang the grateful song, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard, and saved him out of all his troubles. The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him."

Have you, my friend, taken your place by the side of the publican? Have you put away all self-righteousness, and, beating upon your breast, made this appeal, "God be merciful to me a sinner"? If so, help is near; you are not far from the kingdom of God.

(5) *The next step is acquiescence.* For God has a plan of salvation all His own. You must put away all prejudgments, and let Him have His way with you. It is not for a penitent sinner to say how God shall deliver him. You may imagine it is

easy for God, now that you have made your prayer, to reach down His omnipotent arm, and without further ceremony lift you up; but that cannot be. It is impossible, by the laws of the Divine Being, that He should ignore your sin. He cannot restore you to His favour with your sins unexpiated and your iniquities still upon you. His truth forbids, His justice forbids, His holiness forbids.

A man in prison, worn with the burden of his chains and weary of the darkness, hears the foot-fall of the jailer and the clang of his keys; he cries, "O let me out! It is so easy a matter for you to turn the key; throw open this door and release me from these dreadful walls!" But the jailer answers, "I could not if I would, for there is a power behind this key, and an edict vaster than these walls, that forbids. Were I to release you, the law would still pursue you with a whip of scorpions, and justice, like the furies, would be on your track." In like manner I say, If God were to take you with your sins unshiven into His kingdom, the law unexpiated would confront you there, and make a hell of heaven.

But God has an effective plan for your deliverance. It is revealed in these words, "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son,

that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." He *so* loved the world and you—not in such a manner as to save you in disregard of truth and justice and holiness, for that were impossible—but so as to expiate your sins, fulfil the law, and satisfy justice in the vicarious death of His only-begotten and well-beloved Son. Thus it is written, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." And thus the problem is solved, "How can God be just, and the justifier of the ungodly?" And the great question is answered, "How can a man be just with God?"

Do you acquiesce in this plan? Are you willing to be saved in this way? Then are you within a single step of the Ivory Throne.

(6) *The last step is faith.* For passive acquiescence is not enough. Here is a hand reached down, a hand with nail-prints in it. The ever-glorious Son of the Father, who is Elder Brother of us all, is thus eager to lift us up. Get hold of that hand, as you care for life, for your eternal destiny depends upon it!

No man will deny that the God who in His infinite wisdom has devised this plan of salvation, who has provided for our deliverance at so great cost and offered all without money and without

price, had the right to affix a condition upon it. The sole condition is an appropriating faith. All that God asks is that we shall be willing to receive His unspeakable gift, and that we shall stretch forth our hand to grasp it.

III. *Thus have we climbed the steps to the Ivory Throne.* It is the throne of manhood,—restored manhood in Christ. It is not the throne of divine sovereignty. When Salome asked of Jesus in behalf of her two sons that one of them should sit on His right hand and the other on His left in His kingdom, He answered, “It is not Mine to give.” But it is His to give a place to every one of His followers beside Him on the throne which He occupies as the glorified Son of Man. Here we become partakers of the divine nature, attain unto the fulness of His stature, participate with Him as joint heirs of the great inheritance, and dwell in close and eternal relationship with Him. Here we shall reach ultimately the summit of the possibilities of human character in the fulfilment of the promise, “Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

The glory thus promised is for all who are willing to climb to it. The Christians of Laodicea

were urged to aspire after it in these words, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne." He is the great Overcomer, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame. As His disciples who overcome in His strength, we share in His glory—the glory of a victorious and resplendent manhood—and occupy the throne with Him.

I appeal to all that is best and noblest in human nature ; to the dreams and ambitions and aspirations that beckon us away from sin to eternal life. Let us realize the possibilities of our nature ; we are in constant danger of allowing them to go by default through our folly and thoughtlessness. *Sursum corda !* Up with thy heart ! Thou wast made to live for ever. Reject not the proffer of life. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not ; but"—hearken to this gracious word—"to as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God."

WHAT THE LAW COULD NOT DO

“What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh.”—*Rom.* viii. 3.

WHAT THE LAW COULD NOT DO

A GREAT problem is before the mind of Paul; to wit, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" As for himself, he had practically solved that problem in coming to Christ; but there were multitudes of others who were still in despair under the bondage of the law. He wastes no breath in convincing them of sin or of sure retribution; he assumes the "certain fearful looking-for of judgment." His own conception of guilt is that of a corpse bound to a culprit's neck. This was the most dreadful form of punishment known in ancient times.

"The living and the dead, at his command,
Were coupled face to face and hand to hand,
Till, choked with stench, in loathed embraces tied,
The lingering wretches pined away and died."

The true character of sin—its shame, its bondage, its terrific possibilities—are present at one time or another to the consciousness of every man. But how to be delivered? There's the question. "O

wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

To this problem there are two possible solutions, and only two: one says, "Keep the law, and live by it"; the other says, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." There is no other alternative. A man is either in bondage under the law, or else he is under grace, abiding in the glorious liberty of the children of God.

A lot of rough fellows were giving their testimony in the Seaman's Bethel a few evenings ago, when one arose and said, "I have no need of Christ or His gospel. I am a moral man, and try to do right as near as possible. That's enough for me. I am willing to take my chances with the rest of you at the judgment bar of God." No doubt there are many who, although they may not express themselves so frankly, are of like mind and living in the same way.

To such persons the apostle addresses his argument as to the futility of hoping for salvation under law. He was entitled to speak on this subject; for he had earned the degree of Doctor of Laws in the University of Jerusalem, as a pupil of the great Gamaliel, who was called "The Flower of the Law." He speaks of himself as having been a Pharisee of the straitest sect. His business

as a rabbi was to expound the law, and the purpose of his life had been to observe the law, in its most minute particulars, in the hope of thus attaining to the endless life. He had measured his prayers and counted them, as a nun tells the beads of her rosary. He had paid tithes, fasted oft, done penance and addressed himself to good works with the utmost scrupulosity. But one day on the high road to Damascus his eyes were opened ; he saw that his merit-making was labour lost ; a great light shone into his soul and a voice said, "I am Jesus !" From that moment he was no more a legalist, but a believer in grace. He trusted in Christ for salvation. Grace became his sign-manual. His usual greeting was, "Grace be unto you."

His Epistle to the Romans is distinctively addressed to legalists. In it the apostle undertakes to put the law on a right footing. His proposition is, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified," and his *Quod erat demonstrandum* is the mighty truth which was sung by Wesley,

"I'm a poor sinner and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

The apostle here vindicates the law as efficient

for its proper uses. "The law is good," he says ; and again, "The law is spiritual"; and again, "The law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good." But there are certain things which the law cannot do. It has its proper functions ; but too much must not be required of it. Water quenches thirst, but cannot satisfy hunger. A millstone is a good thing in its place, but we shall probably agree that a millstone is not a good thing to be tied about a man's neck when he is learning to swim. To everything its proper uses.

Certain things the law can and does accomplish :—

I. *The law expresses the mind of God.* It is written : "No man hath seen God at any time." If you wish to form a just conception of some one you have never seen, you make inquiry as to his voice, his features, his moral and mental characteristics. We proceed in like manner in "finding out God." There are voices in nature and in providence to help us ; but nowhere shall we get so clear a delineation of the divine character as at Sinai. The precepts and principles here enunciated give a clear outline of His nature and attributes ; they speak of His justice, His righteousness, His truth. And the one clear, composite

impression which we receive from the Decalogue is that the Lord is a holy God.

II. *The law declares the whole duty of man.* As we are made after God's image, our highest attainment is Godliness ; that is, Godlikeness. The precepts that set forth the divine character furnish by the same token the perfect rule of human behaviour. "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

It is a noteworthy fact that the Ten Commandments are universally recognized as a perfect code. Men scoff at Christ, at the gospel, at the inerrant Scriptures ; but there is a general consensus as to the faultless character of the Decalogue. What a Paradise our world would be if only men everywhere would obey it !

III. *The law draws up an indictment against all who violate it.* It shows a man his natural face as in a glass. He who comes to the flaming mountain with a mind free from prejudice is certain to be filled with fear and trembling ; "for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

A young man was lately arrested and tried for forgery. He made an earnest plea in his own behalf, alleging his former good character. The court was disposed to deal leniently with him. The officer who made the arrest said, "Your Honour, if you will wait a moment, I think I can

convince you of the true character of this man." He went to the Rogues' Gallery and came back presently with a picture of a youth wearing a striped jacket, and with his hair cropped short. It was this same innocent-looking prisoner at the bar. All men are put to shame in like manner by the testimony of the moral law. It takes a "snapshot" of every one of us a hundred times a day, and always with the same result ; it catches us invariably in the overt act of sin.

IV. *The law pronounces sentence upon us.* "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." We are said to be "condemned already." In this matter the law works automatically. To be sure, by reason of His justice, God must ratify its action ; but if it were conceivable that God should cease to be while the law continued, the result would be precisely the same. For sin and penalty are yoked together as cause and effect.

How can we be so stolid and unconcerned in the face of such tremendous truths ? Do we call them in question ? Or, can we evade their logical conclusions ? So did Belshazzar feel secure in his festal hall. He knew that a hostile army surrounded his city ; but had he not laid in provision for twenty years ? On with the feast ! All over the walls were cuneiform inscriptions to his glory.

His wives and concubines were about him and a thousand of his lords. "Bring the sacred vessels that my royal father took from the Jewish Temple!" It was done. The revellers drank deep from the sacramental cups. But on a sudden the king's face was blanched with terror, and his knees smote together. Yonder on the wall were spectral fingers writing. Bring the seers, the astrologers, and let them interpret! MENE, MENE, TEKEL; "Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting." And, UPHAR-SIN! What means Upharsin? "Thy kingdom is divided and given away!"

This is the message of the law to every man: "Weighed and found wanting," and "Thy kingdom is rent from thee." Shall the matter end here? Shall the law take its course? Shall the sentence be executed? He that doeth the law shall live by it, and he that disobeyeth shall die by it.

We have seen what the law can do and does. Let us turn now to the other side, and inquire what the law cannot do.

First, it cannot compel obedience. It has to deal with men who are possessed of independent wills. Had men been created otherwise than with moral freedom, they would have been no more capable

of positive character than stocks or stones or graven images or hitching-posts. But moral freedom involves the power to do right or wrong at pleasure. The law says, "Thou shalt"; a man can answer, "I will not." And the awful calamity is that we all by nature are disposed to antagonize the law. This is not the time for a discussion on depravity; let it suffice to call attention to the universal fact. We would rather break than keep the law. Did you ever see a sign, "No Trespassing," without feeling inclined on the instant to climb the fence and cross that particular field?

It is not the law's fault that it cannot enforce itself. The words of the apostle are, "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh," that is, by reason of our infirmity. As I passed along Nassau Street yesterday in dreamy mood, I heard a voice say, "Please help me over." A blind man stood helpless on the corner, waiting for some one of the thronging multitude to lead him over the crossing. I took his arm; and as we passed on, I observed that his eyes were wide open and uplifted. The sun shone brightly; the light had all its usual potency; but, alas! it was weak through his flesh. Had I led that man to the best of our opticians and said, "Give him spectacles," he would have replied, "My services

are of no value in this case ; I can do nothing for him." So is it with the law. It is intrinsically mighty, but utterly disabled in the case of a wilful man.

Secondly, *it cannot ignore sin.* Here again it works automatically, as if it were a machine made of levers and wheels. It has no heart to pity, otherwise it would not be law. It is all eyes. It must take cognizance of every sin.

And here is a startling fact—you may resent it, but the logic is beyond all peradventure—"Whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." There is a manifest reason for this. A chain is measured by the strength of its weakest link. A ship held by an iron cable is, if one link be broken, at the mercy of the storm. In order to break the electric connection between America and the British Isles, it is not necessary to destroy the whole submarine cable ; cut out one inch and you break the circuit. If you would wreck a train on the New York Central, do not take the trouble to tear up the track clear from New York to Albany ; dig under a single rail at Garrison's and the thing is done. So is it with the strength of the moral law as a saving power. "He that keepeth it shall live by it" ; but a single sin breaks the charm. It makes

a man a sinner, arrays him against the law, and brings him under the penalty: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

Thirdly, *the law cannot absolve from sin.* It cannot pardon. Hence the proverb, "Relentless as law." It cannot make allowances or receive excuses. It is vain for us to stand at Sinai and say, "I did not think," or, "I did not intend," or, "I will never do it again." The law turns neither to the right hand nor to the left, but moves straight on.

It was a true word that Anne of Austria said to Richelieu: "My lord Cardinal, there is one fact which you seem to have entirely forgotten: the law of Jehovah is a sure paymaster; it may not be at the end of every day or month, but I charge you, my lord, to remember this, the law sooner or later is a sure paymaster!"

Fourthly, *therefore the law cannot save.* The one thing which we require of it is absolutely impossible. It can justify no flesh. It is written "We are all concluded under sin." The word "concluded" here means literally "shut up." We are all in prison, condemned and awaiting the execution of our sentence. The law can do many things for us in this emergency: it can bring us food and water, nosegays and books to read; it

can promise us a decent burial ; it can buy us a shroud, a black cap and a beautiful silken rope for our neck ; it can promise a eulogy and a Latin epitaph ; it can do everything but the one thing needful,—it cannot open the doors, it cannot let us out into freedom and light. At this point, if we are reasonable men, we cry for a kind of help which the law cannot give us.

And yet the law is not impotent at this juncture. In mentioning what it could do, I designedly omitted one thing ; namely, "*The law is a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ.*" It cannot save, but it can point us to the Saviour. It cannot save, but it can terrify us with its lightnings and thunders until we flee from the flaming mountain to the mountain that is stained with blood. Here the Merciful One hangs upon the Cross, the Mighty to Save.

"O safe and happy shelter,
O refuge tried and sweet ;
O trysting-place where Heaven's love
And Heaven's justice meet !

"There lies beneath its shadow,
But on the farther side,
The darkness of an awful grave
That gapes both deep and wide.

“And there between us stands the Cross,
Two arms outstretch’d to save,
Like a watchman set to guard the way
From that eternal grave.”

“*For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.*” He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. He that believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.

You must take your choice, my friend. You must! You must live either under the law or under grace. You must go on in a hopeless endeavour to work your way to everlasting life, or you must trust in Jesus and let Him save you. Does your pride stand in the way? An infidel once said, “I tell you frankly, I am not willing to be saved *gratis*.” But grace is gratuity. The unspeakable gift of God is without money and without price. “Only believe.” If you are ever saved, you must be saved that way.

As Napoleon rode through the Rue de Rivoli, returning from the front with his victorious army, a young girl ran out of the crowd and threw herself before his horse’s feet. “Mercy, sire!” she

cried. "What will you, my daughter?" he said kindly. "O sire! mercy for my father; he is the officer whom you have sentenced to death for treason." The face of Napoleon hardened. "Your father shall have justice," he replied. At that saying, her fervour increased: "O sire, not justice, but mercy! Justice means death! Mercy! mercy, sire!" And this, friends, is the only plea that a sinner can offer before God. Justice means death. Law means shame and despair for ever. Let us beat upon our breasts and make our plea, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" And He who is able to save even unto the uttermost will hear and answer us.

EUODIA AND SYNTYCHE

“I beseech Euodia, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of one mind in the Lord.”—*Phil. iv. 2*

EUODIA AND SYNTYCHE

THE Epistles are of great value, not only for their formulation of our Lord's teaching, but for the light they throw upon the early life of the Church. We learn from them that the primitive Christians were a singularly earnest, affectionate, and simple folk. We catch, in the passage before us, a glimpse of their mutual relations. It is a dual biography in a nutshell: "I beseech Euodia, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of one mind in the Lord." These persons are nowhere else referred to. The outline is faint enough; yet on thoughtful consideration it reveals not a few interesting facts.

I. The persons here mentioned were women. They were members of the Philippian Church, which is often spoken of as a "woman's church." A peculiar interest attaches to its origin. Paul, while tarrying at Troas, on the border of the *Æ*gean Sea, saw in a vision a man clad in Macedonian garb stretching out his hands and saying

“Come over and help us!” The apostle was not disobedient unto the vision, but immediately took ship for Europe, and turned his steps forthwith to the Macedonian city of Philippi. On the morning of the Sabbath he set out to find the man of his vision. By the river-side, in a place where prayer was wont to be made, he found a company of women assembled, and to them he preached the unsearchable riches of Christ. The heart of Lydia the purple-seller was open to receive the truth. Thus the man of Paul’s vision proved to be a woman; and this was the beginning of the Philippian Church.

It is frequently said by way of criticism that two-thirds of the members of the entire Christian Church are of the gentler sex. The statement is true, and is to be partly accounted for, perhaps, by the fact that women, on account of their peculiar life and occupation, have time to reflect upon the great problems of eternity. God pity the men, ever in the madding crowd, absorbed in secular affairs, who find so little leisure to consider the welfare of their immortal souls! But shall the fact referred to be regarded as a reflection on the character of the Church? Before we leap to that conclusion, let us yoke with it another fact; to wit, seven-eighths of the inmates of our prisons

and penitentiaries are men. A fair deduction from both these premises can place no discredit upon the Church for her preponderance of female membership. Indeed, it speaks eloquently for her thoughtfulness and purity of character.

II. We are given to understand that *Euodia and Syntyche were good women*. There is much in a name. Euodia means "fragrance"; Syntyche means "happiness." We are informed that they were "labourers in the gospel." It is probable that they were deaconesses. In those days it was a fine custom to appoint women for the special care of the poor. In our foreign missionary work we have found it necessary to revive that custom, in some measure, for zenana visitation. The homes of the Orient are open only to women visitors, and the gospel can never be made effective until it reaches these penetralia; for home is the centre of social and civil life.

We have a further intimation as to the character of Euodia and Syntyche in the statement that their names were written "in the Book of Life." This means more than good and regular standing in the Philippian Church; it leaves no question as to their sincere and vital fellowship with Christ.

III. *These good women were not of one mind.* It would appear that their disagreement was

generally known and deplored in the Philippian Church.

No doubt it was a great occasion among the Christians of this Macedonian city when Paul's letter was publicly read. It had been rumoured among the people that such a letter had been received from the beloved founder of the Church, who was at that time a prisoner in Rome. And there was great anticipation. At the appointed hour on the Lord's Day all were present to hear it. A deep silence rested on the congregation as the reading proceeded ; but there was a rustle and a turning of faces at these words : "*I beseech Euodia, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.*" The two women, who probably sat as far apart as possible on that occasion, must have heard with tingling ears. It was fortunate for them that their flushed cheeks were hidden by their veils. But still more distressed and mortified would they have been had they known that their names were to be handed down to posterity only in connection with their unfortunate estrangement.

IV. *The quarrel was about a trifle.* We infer this from the fact that Paul asked for no investigation of their case. He did not advise that they be summoned before the official board. Indeed,

the whole affair would appear to have been much ado about nothing. It may have originated in a bit of gossip, a flash of temper, or an inadvertent word.

Is it not true that most disagreements have a slight origin? The Koran says that the first quarrel was between Adam and Eve soon after leaving Paradise, and began on this wise: Eve had somehow come into possession of a rude mirror; she looked and saw therein a woman who smiled at her in a supercilious manner, as if to say, "You think yourself fair; but look on me. Ah, wait until Adam sees me!" And Eve, meeting her spouse, forthwith took him to task for it.

We should find it difficult to account for most of our likes and dislikes; and as for our bitter disagreements, it would be quite impossible to justify them. The best that can be said is,—

"I do not like thee, Dr. Fell;
The reason why I cannot tell."

V. *It would appear that both women were to blame.* This may be inferred from their having an equal interest in the message: "I beseech Euodia, and beseech Syntyche." Had it been otherwise there might have been some uncertainty as to which should make the first advances. Being

equally concerned in the disagreement, they should emulate each other in making peace.

It takes two to make a quarrel. You must have flint and steel, or you will get no spark. There is usually a quick temper on either side ; the potency of fire is in both steel and flint. And by the same token there should be no recrimination, but a mutual interest in reparation and peace. As a rule the less blameworthy of the parties may be known by his greater readiness to make the *amende honorable*.

VI. *The results of this quarrel were far-reaching.* It has come down through nineteen hundred years. It casts a serious reflection on the character of the two women. It was a scandal in the Philippian Church, and still remains as a reproach to it. “How far that little candle throws his beams !”

The Thirty Years’ War, with its terrific blood-
shed and desolation, began in a frivolous disagree-
ment at table. A marriage had been arranged
between the houses of Neuburg and Brandenburg.
At the splendid espousal feast, the Elector of
Brandenburg threw a glass of wine into the face of
his intended son-in-law. The youth went away in
high dudgeon, and offered his hand to the Princess
of Bavaria. In pursuance of that union, an

alliance was formed with the royal house of Spain, and presently Neuburg and his army marched forth to engage in the long and bloody war. Nor is this a singular instance. The great events of history usually turn on small pivots, and not infrequently the destiny of kingdoms is determined by the agreements or disagreements of humble men.

VII. *We do not know that Euodia and Syntyche were ever reconciled on earth.* It goes without saying that they are friends now; for is it not written, "Their names are in the Book of Life"? During all these centuries they have been in the Father's house, where there are no quarrels, but all see face to face and eye to eye.

The Scriptural mode of adjusting a disagreement is very clear. "If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." "Tell him." "Tell him between thee and him alone." The trouble is that under such circumstances we are likely to tell everybody else rather than the one who has offended against us. The chasm is widened by thus blazoning the fault abroad. No whispering then behind your brother! There is a whole panorama of meanness in the word "backbiting."

And again it is written, "If thou bring thy gift

to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way ; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." If this were transcribed into our vernacular, it would read like this : " If you come to the sanctuary to worship God, and discover in your heart any hatred or resentment ; or if you are aware that any of the brethren has had occasion to regard you in an unfriendly way, be assured that your devotions will give no sweet savour before your Father in heaven until you have set yourself right with your fellow-man."

On one occasion Peter came to Jesus saying : " Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him ? till seven times ? " It was a question of fine casuistry. The Rabbi Ben-Sira had said, " If thou hast a grudge against thy brother, forgive him twice before thou cherish it." No doubt Peter thought he was going far beyond such Jewish narrowness in suggesting " seven times." It probably did not occur to him that the placing of any limit whatever on the magnanimity of Christian character gives it a rank foreign savour of narrowness and externalism. And Jesus answered, " I say not unto thee, Until

seven times; but, Until seventy times seven." That is, the world of mercy knows no horizons. There should be no more limit to our mutual forbearance than there is to the grace of God.

The women who were parties to this Philippian quarrel are generic types. And the practical application is plain. I would not have it suspected that the occasion of the present discourse is any quarrel in the Collegiate Church; for it is a pleasure to say that in the years of my ministry I have never known a personal disagreement among you. However, it is greatly to be doubted if there is one here who has viewed this ancient quarrel as a mere "looker on in Venice." Have you no grudges, no hatreds nor jealousies? Is your heart all sweetness and light? Are you kindly affectioned toward all? Oh, let us open our souls to the influence of the heavenly Dove to-day!

But this is not so easy as might appear. The patching up of a disagreement is not a matter for mere resolution. There must be personal explanation, concession, perhaps an apology. There is nothing harder than to say, "I beg your pardon"; but a man is at his best when he says it. This is what Milton calls "the lowly loftiness of mind which is exalted by its own humiliation."

A knight's tombstone in England bears this inscription :

“Here lies a soldier whom all must applaud,
Who fought many battles at home and abroad ;
But the hottest engagement he ever was in
Was the conquest of self in the battle with sin.”

It would be difficult to find a man of sweeter spirit than John Wesley, if we may credit his biographers. And yet there was an occasion on which Joseph Bradford got the better of him. He had asked Bradford, his familiar friend, to carry a letter to the post. The reply was, “After service.” “Nay, now.” “I will not, until I have heard thy discourse.” “Then our friendship ceases.” “Very well, so be it.” Wesley preached, and Bradford listened ; the benediction was pronounced ; and both went home to toss upon uneasy beds. The next morning Bradford said, “John, must we part?” “It is for thee to say.” “Wilt ask my pardon?” “Nay, never ! never !” “Then I will ask thine ; John, forgive me !” The ice was broken, and they were friends faithful until death.

We who profess to follow the Lord Jesus Christ cannot afford to endanger our inward peace, jeopardize our reputation and bring reproach on

the goodly fellowship by falling out along the way. Oh, for the spirit of Nehemiah and those who laboured together with him ! We, too, are temple-builders. Our work is too important, our life is too brief, for criminations and recriminations, for the bickerings of the sordid, selfish life. Let this be our word to the demons of enmity who thrust out the lip and point the finger at us from the plain of Ono, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down!"

Let it be remembered that we journey always on the narrow borders of the eternal world. If there are bitternesses to be healed or differences to compose, let us not wait until the shadows enfold us. I know of no more pathetic tale than that of the chronic quarrel of Commodores Barron and Decatur. They were both able officers who had served the United States faithfully. But year by year they nursed a petty disagreement until it found its dreadful consummation in the duello. They met on the field, breathing out mutual hatred ; and at the first report, both fell. Side by side they lay dying. "Let us make friends," said Barron, "ere we meet before the throne of God." "I never have been your enemy," replied Decatur, breathing heavily, "and freely forgive you my death." "Would to God that you had

said as much yesterday. God bless thee, Decatur!" "God bless thee, my friend!"

"Of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these, It might have been."

I beseech you, brethren, by the Cross of Jesus Christ that ye love one another with pure hearts fervently. I beseech you by the Golden Rule that ye expect no more of kindness from your fellows than you willingly accord to them. I beseech you by the hope of heaven that ye entreat one another as children of the Father, for so it is written : "Ye be brethren; see that ye fall not out by the way." "Be ye kindly affectioned one toward another; in honour preferring one another; forgiving one another, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

A PLEA FOR FANATICISM

“ But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do ? ”
—*Neh.* ii. 19.

A PLEA FOR FANATICISM

THE Jews who returned from the Babylonian captivity were a feeble folk, like the conies —feeble in numbers, but great in courage and steadfastness. They met with serious opposition when they set themselves in earnest to restore the ruined city. The heads of the surrounding tribes at first accused them of conspiring against the king ; this, however, was easily refuted by the decree of Artaxerxes. They then invited the Jews to submit the matter of controversy to arbitration : “Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono.” The answer was, “We are doing a great work, so that we cannot come down.” The hardest thing the exiles had to bear, however, was ridicule. Their opposers “were wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked them.” Sanballat said, “What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they accomplish their purpose in a day? will they revive their city out of the rubbish heaps?” And his

comrade Tobiah laughingly said, "If a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." But on went the work until the walls were finished and dedicated "with thanksgivings and singing, with cymbals and psalteries and harps." They laugh best who laugh last!

The sharpest weapon of Antichrist in our time is derision. His bow is laughter, and his arrows are epithets. We no longer stand in terror of the axe, the fagot, and the dungeon ; but we are always in danger of being laughed down. A boy at school finds it easier to bear the discipline of the birch than to be told that he is restrained by his mother's apron string. The pointed finger is a deadlier weapon than the naked sword. The height of courage is to stand at our places in the building of the wall, regardless of sneers and reproaches, of taunt and invective, of hissing and vituperation. These are the things that try the soul of a man.

At the beginning of the last century a few youths in Oxford came together for the study of the Scriptures. They were dubbed "The Holy Club" ; but they smiled and pursued their work. In due time the members of this association carried their zeal out into the larger world of affairs ; then they were derisively called "Methodists." But they stood to their principles, and glorified God in that name.

Among them were the two Wesleys and Whitfield. They accepted the derisive epithets that were applied to them, as Samson shouldered the gates of Gaza and carried them away to the mountain.

Up from the fens of England came a company of stalwart yeomen to the defence of civil and ecclesiastical freedom. They wore no frills or furbelows. Unlike the cavaliers, whose curls fell over their shoulders, their hair was cropped. They were greeted with the epithet "Roundheads." They made no uncivil reply, but marched on to Marston Moor ; there, with the shout, "God with us !" they set the cavaliers a-flying like chaff before the wind.

In 1666 a company of Dutch nobles appeared before the Regent, to protest against the impositions of the Council of Trent. Count Berlaymont, observing the Regent's trepidation, said, "Fear not, your Majesty ; they are but a pack of beggars." They forthwith hung about their necks the beggar's wallet, and marshalled an army against the legions of Spain. Their cry, "Oranje boven !" rang through the Hollow-Land, and "The Water Beggars" became a name to juggle with.

The fiercest of the weapons turned against our Master was ridicule. Some of the finest things

that were ever said of Him were said in epithetic form. They called Him "The Carpenter"; accepting the title, He gave dignity to common toil, and became for all time the champion of the Third Estate. They called Him "The friend of publicans and sinners"; not resenting it, He chose for an apostle Matthew the publican, and said to the Magdalene, "Go in peace." They crowned Him with thorns, and bowed before Him in mock obeisance, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" The epithet was inscribed on the titulum which was nailed to the cross. He is honoured and worshipped to-day as King of the whole Israel of God.

Blessed is the man who, in defence of his principles, can thus turn to advantage the weapons of his foes. When some one said to Diogenes, who lifted his voice against the sensuous pleasures of his time, "Thine enemies deride thee," he answered bravely, "Nevertheless, I am not derided!" The man who is sensible of right intention and high aspiration can afford to rise superior to puerile opposition. Shall we expect to be exempt? "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you."

I. You have opinions; and because they are deeply grounded in mind and conscience and

heart, you are tenacious of them. My friend, *you are a bigot!* The "liberals" will tell you that Christianity is not doctrine but life. They will quote with unction,

"For forms of faith let canting bigots fight;
His faith cannot be wrong whose life is right."

They cannot understand why you should be a stickler for a creed. If you still insist, they will tell you frankly that you are narrow and intolerant. Do not flinch. Do not resent it. Plead guilty, and, as a bigot, proceed to glorify God.

For what is a bigot? Webster says, "One who is stubbornly wedded to a particular creed." So be it. There are some truths which, when a man has accepted them, are so interwoven with the very fibres of his being that he cannot keep his manhood and surrender or qualify them.

You believe in God; a personal God; a God whom you can call, "Our Father"; a God who has eyes to see, a heart to pity, and hands to help. A scientific friend comes to you, saying, "I also believe in God; an all-pervading force, a something-not-ourselves that maketh for righteousness, the essence of things. Why, then, can we not walk together?" And what can you answer? "Nay, friend, there is a great gulf between us. I

am stubbornly wedded to my faith in a personal God."

You believe in Jesus Christ as the manifestation of this God. He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person. He that hath seen Christ hath seen the Father. He is very God of very God. A Unitarian friend appeals to you : "Why should we not walk together ? I also believe in Christ ; He was the noblest man that ever lived. Shall we not, then, abide in fellowship ?" What can you say ? "Friend, we differ at the vital point. The divinity of Jesus Christ is not one of the non-essentials. It is the root and foundation of all. I cannot surrender it for friendship's sake."

You believe in the Bible ; you have taken it as your only and infallible rule of faith and practice ; you say, It is the Word of God ; and you are not juggling with words. A friend, who favours the Higher Criticism, comes to you saying, "I too believe in the Bible ; not as a true book, indeed ; but as a book true in spots. Why should we part company on so trivial a matter ?" What must you answer, as an honest man ? Tell him the Bible is the only historic witness of Jesus Christ ; and that a man, therefore, cannot part company with the Bible and keep company with Christ.

Tell him that the Bible is inspired, that is, "God-breathed," and that God could not have breathed a lie.

You believe in Justification by Faith ; the great doctrine of the evangelical Church ; "*articulum ecclesiæ stantis aut cadentis.*" A rationalistic friend says, "What difference does it make? All ways lead to Rome. There is good in all religions and philosophies. Some people are saved by works, others by penance, still others by liturgical forms. Let us hope, however, that we shall all come together at heaven's gate." Are you loyal to your Christian profession? Tell him, then, all ways may lead to Rome, but there is only one way that leads to heaven ; to wit, the royal way of the Cross. "For there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

In taking such positions you will be charged with intolerance. Nevertheless the world will respect you. In the end you will sacrifice no friendships, but win the profound regard of those who differ with you. In any case we must be true to our convictions. We must stand for what we believe. We cannot compromise.

A few years ago a black man came to the ticket office of the Albany Line, in this city, registered

his name, and asked for a state-room. The clerk was much embarrassed on perceiving that the name was "Frederick Douglass, Negro." He said, "I am extremely sorry, but the rules of the company require that coloured men shall sleep on the lower deck. But if you will kindly allow me to substitute 'Indian' for 'Negro,' I can give you a state-room." Mr. Douglass replied with indignation, "No, sir! Put me down Negro, plain Negro, and I will sleep in the hold." He who does not respect such courage as that, lacks the spirit of a man.

II. You have a conscience; you have a clear apprehension of the difference between right and wrong; you are scrupulous in avoiding whatever is contrary to this rule of conduct. My friend, *you are a Puritan!* This is what your free-and-easy friend will tell you. And, I pray you, do not begin to deny or to apologize. Do not enter any defence. Plead guilty to the charge, and proceed to justify it.

Who were the Puritans? The best men of their time. They had their faults; they walked with a measured gait, wore a too melancholy visage, and spoke with a nasal twang. They inveighed against the maypole, and deemed it sacrilege to eat plum pudding on Christmas Day. But there

was a sweet kernel in that rough nut. We can forgive the Puritans for leaning a little backward in their devotion to conscience, when we remember the lax morals of those days. It is better to err on the side of strict morality than to be lax and lawless. Better be a precisian than a Parisian ; better be straight-laced than rickety. Hands off the memory of the Puritans ! No braver men ever lived. Macaulay says, "No man ever despised them who had met them in debate, or crossed swords with them on the embattled field."

For two great principles they stood with a patient and unswerving courage :—*First*, for the sanctity of the Moral Law. They believed in the Decalogue as it is interpreted in the Sermon on the Mount. They denounced the custom of profanity, so current in their day. We are largely indebted to them for the institution of the Christian home ; the family altar with the Bible on it, and the household gathered around it. We are greatly indebted to them, also, for the preservation of the holy Sabbath. They denounced the *Book of Sports*, which represented the loose morals of the Stuart family, which finds its exact counterpart in the diluted piety of those who favour our Sunday newspapers, and athletic games on the Lord's day.

Second, they contended for the freedom of the individual conscience as against all interference of civil or ecclesiastical authority. At this point they set themselves distinctly against the fashions of their time. “Non-conformity” was their shibboleth ; as it is written, “Be not conformed unto this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds” ; and again, “Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord” ; and again, “He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works” ; and again, “Ye are the light of the world ; let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

In all this the Puritans are worthy of imitation. Our religion is not a matter of sentiment, but of principle. If we have entered into God’s fellowship, we must needs love what He loves, and hate what He hates. No one can be a true Christian who fears scrupulosity in the avoidance of sin.

All the world knows how the French people, at the conclusion of the Franco-Prussian war, refused to hold fellowship with their foes. I stood once in a rose-garden, in a little town in Brittany-by-the-Sea, and heard an old baroness—whose son,

a general in the French army, had recently been slain in battle—relate how she had refused to accept the courtesies of Von Moltke in an apartment of a railway car. Her eyes flashed, her bosom heaved, her lips trembled while she told it. “But, madam,” said I, “why could you not accept courtesy even from your foe?” With a splendid and pathetic dignity she said, “Why, sir, his hands were red with the blood of my only son!” Would that we might manifest some of that spirit in our attitude toward sin! God hates it. God hates it with an utter loathing and abhorrence. How could it be otherwise? It nailed to the cross His well-beloved Son. Our abhorrence of sin is the sure token of our fellowship with Him.

III. You are in earnest; you think it means something to be a follower of Christ; you are constrained by His love; the thought of His great mercy and of the sinfulness of rejecting Him forbids that you should hold your peace. My friend, *you are a fanatic!* All the world and many of your Christian friends will tell you so. But do not resent it. Stand to your guns. It is a glorious thing to be in dead earnest for the right.

Why is it that earnestness is commended in

everything else but religion? There was Archimedes the mathematician, who, when the enemy, at the capture of Syracuse, rushed in upon him with uplifted sword, was so intent upon a geometric figure drawn upon the floor that he merely said, with a deprecating gesture, "Wait a moment! just a moment, until I solve this." Such concentration of purpose is admirable in any cause. Why not, then, in ours?

(1) We believe there is a real danger. "All have sinned." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Hell is an awful fact. Our Lord coupled it with the figures of the unquenchable fire and the undying worm. And those who reject the Lord Jesus Christ are rushing headlong towards it. He that believeth not in Jesus Christ shall be condemned. If these things are so, how can we forbear to warn those who are in jeopardy of life? If a man passing on Fifth Avenue were to see flames issuing from the roof of this sanctuary, he would rush through the door without ceremony, crying, "Fire! Fire!" Would you blame him? Would you say, "My friend, you are interrupting the service?" Nay, you would praise and thank him for it.

(2) We believe also in a way of escape. The life-line is thrown out from Calvary. It is the

one plan of salvation. It is simple and effective. It is offered on the sole condition of faith. "He that believeth shall be saved." If so, it is of the utmost importance that our friends shall close in with its overtures. A few days ago one of our great steamships came into port with her engines disabled. She reported that for three days she had drifted about in mid-ocean, in great peril, and that her signals were unheeded by an inbound steamer passing by. There was great indignation. On a sudden, however, the matter was hushed up; the reason being that the passing steamer was a sister ship of the same line. There can be but one opinion as to the utter turpitude of such a course. But what shall be said of Christian people living in close fellowship with those whom they believe to be in danger of spiritual and eternal death, members even of their own households, whom yet they warn not?

In the year 66, Festus, the governor at Cæsarea, was visited by King Agrippa and his mistress, Bernice. For their entertainment Paul was brought out of his dungeon, wearing his chains, and required to display his eloquence. He did so with tremendous effect. He told the simple story of his conversion on the Damascus highway, of the sunburst that changed the whole tenor of

his life, of the voice saying, "I am Jesus," of his blindness and the subsequent revelation of truth. And as he thus spoke, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad!" He answered, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness." Mad? O, would to God there were more fanatics like Paul! The truths we profess are so solemn, the issues involved are so stupendous, that it seems as if, should we keep silence, the very stones must cry out.

Just forty years ago a man arose in our Fulton Street prayer meeting, in the presence of a large assemblage of business men, and read these words, which he had written during the previous night:—

"Where'er we meet, you always say,
What's the news? what's the news?
Pray what's the order of the day?
What's the news? what's the news?
Oh! I have got good news to tell;
My Saviour hath done all things well,
And triumphed over death and hell,
That's the news! that's the news!"

"The Lord has pardoned all my sin—
That's the news! that's the news!
I feel the witness now within—
That's the news! that's the news!"

And since He took my sins away,
And taught me how to watch and pray,
I'm happy now from day to day—
That's the news! that's the news!"

At this moment we are all profoundly interested in "the news." Our hearts are moved by rumours of approaching war; we can scarcely wait for the issues of the daily press. But to one who has really and adequately grasped the great verities of our religion, is there any current event to be compared with the tragedy on Golgotha? Or any happening that can so profoundly concern him as this revelation of God's mercy to his own soul?

We are enlisted under the red banner of the Cross. It stands to us for truth and righteousness, for mercy and eternal life. If we love Christ, let us be loyal to it. Let not Sanballat and Tobiah laugh us out of our convictions. Let us not be ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Let us be true. Let us be in dead earnest. Let us be loyal to Christ.

THE WITHERED HAND

“ And He entered into the synagogue ; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. And they watched Him, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath day ; that they might accuse Him. And He saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And He saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil ? to save life, or to kill ? But they held their peace. And when He had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, He saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out ; and his hand was restored whole as the other.”—*Mark* iii. 1-5.

THE WITHERED HAND

THE second year of our Lord's ministry was drawing to a close. The clouds were gathering dark about Him. There was a widespread interest in His preaching ; as it is written, "the common people heard Him gladly." But the rulers were against Him ; and not without reason.

To begin with, He utterly failed to meet their cherished views of the Messiah. They expected Him to come in royal state, but Jesus was the son of a carpenter ; "a root out of a dry ground ; He had no form nor comeliness that they should desire Him."

Another reason for their opposition was His denunciation of their darling sins ; for, in spite of their ceremonial sanctity, they were given to usury, uncleanness, and a general disregard of the true spirit of the Moral Law. He found them parading before the people in broad phylacteries, and with scriptural frontlets between their eyes. He cried, "Woe unto you, mask-wearers ! Ye are as whitened

sepulchres ; fair without, but within full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness." Little wonder that they opposed Him !

Moreover, He was "the friend of publicans and sinners." This was a notorious charge ; and—the more shame—He apparently gloried in it. He said, They that be whole need not a physician ; I am come to seek and to save the lost. The words with which He closed the parable of the Lost Sheep cut to the quick—"I say unto you, joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance."

A still further offence was His claim of Godhood. He said, "I and My Father are one" ; and again, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" ; so, repeatedly, making Himself equal with God. He claimed to forgive sin, which was plain blasphemy ; as the Pharisees said, "Who but God hath power on earth to forgive sin ?"

But the crowning offence of Jesus in their eyes was His contemptuous disregard of their *Toldoth*, or Sabbath prescripts. The Sabbath was their fetish. They had made it a weariness to the people by adding a vast number of burdensome requirements. It was unlawful to walk upon the greensward on the Sabbath, lest the grass being in

seed, the act should be construed as threshing. A radish must not be left in the salt, lest it should prove to be pickling on the Holy Day. A man must not feed his poultry more than was absolutely necessary, lest the remainder of the grain should germinate, and he might be justly charged with sowing. The Lord Jesus had no patience with these *Toldoth*; He said to the Pharisees, "Ye have made the law to be of none effect by your vain traditions"; and again, "Ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne."

On the morning of the Sabbath of our context He had permitted His disciples, as they were passing through the fields, to pluck the ears of grain and rub them in their hands. They were called to account for this, as a specific violation of the Sabbath law. He vindicated them in a brief reply, concluding with the words, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath; wherefore, the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath."

It was the afternoon of the same day when He entered into the synagogue. A great company was assembled; and there was a man there with a withered hand. The enemies of Jesus watched Him—for, knowing His humanity, they expected Him to heal this man, despite their traditional

prohibition. He perceived what was in their hearts, and said indignantly, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to plot murder—as ye are doing now?" And they held their peace; for what could they say? He looked round on them with indignation, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts; and then He healed the man.

What is the lesson? For, let it be understood, the miracles are not mere singular acts of healing; they are acted parables, for the setting forth of spiritual truth. We know what Jesus meant when He fed the five thousand: "I am the living bread, which came down from heaven, of which if a man eat he shall never hunger." We know what He meant when He wiped away the leper's spots: "Come now, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; and though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." We know what He meant by the raising of Lazarus from the dead: "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." But what is the meaning here?

(1) This miracle teaches, at the outset, *the compassion of Jesus*. The man who had the withered

hand is said, in one of the Apocryphal gospels, to have been a stone-mason, with a wife and children dependent upon him. It was a case indeed to move a compassionate heart. Our Lord pities all the distressed. If the roofs of our city were to be lifted, we should hide our eyes at the pitiful sight. O, the pain and sorrow ! The multitudes who toss on beds of languishing ; the shame, the despair, the breaking hearts ! But the roofs *are* lifted before Him ; and He sees and pities all.

(2) It teaches, also, *the true spirit of Sabbath observance*. There are foolish people who hold that Jesus swept away the sanctions of the Fourth Commandment. How grievously they misunderstand Him !

Let us hear a parable of the Lord of the Castle. He went his way, and sojourned for a season in a far country. On his return he found a fantastic group of harlequins in possession of his mansion. They had set up their implements of jugglery in his chambers, and hung their fantastic banners on its outer walls. They had permitted thorns and thistles to grow along its garden paths, and had collected heaps of rubbish in its gates. He was filled with indignation, and cried, " Away with your implements of magic ! Tear down yon banners ! Clear out the garden paths, and remove

the foul *débris* from the gates!" Was this destruction? Nay, it was restoration. So did our Lord cry out against the *Toldoth*, the "vain traditions" of the elders, because they had made the Sabbath a burden and weariness to the people. As Lord of the Sabbath, He claimed the right to restore the sanctions of the original law.

(3) But there is another lesson here, which I desire to emphasize particularly, as to *our relation to great spiritual truths*. The Lord spoke twice to the man with the withered hand, and both words were necessary to the work of healing: "Stand forth," and "Stretch forth thy hand." Both were intended to stimulate the man to self-exertion. Our Master's teaching on this, as on other occasions, was like the blast of a pibroch in the Scottish hills above a sleeping village. We are all too dull and apathetic; He comes to awaken, to invigorate and stimulate us.

I. "*Stand forth*"; literally, "Forth into the midst!" This meant publicity. The man was here subjected to a trying ordeal; for chronic sufferers are usually diffident. Nevertheless, the Master did not spare him. "Forth into the midst!" It suggests that the religion of Jesus is not for the cloister. God's remedies are sunlight and mountain air. The Christian is not called to

be a silent cenobite, but above all a man among men.

(a) He who seeks salvation is required at the outset to make a frank acknowledgment of sin and an open confession of his belief that Christ can save him ; for “with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Is this unreasonable ? Christ in our behalf was nailed upon a tree, the tree was raised upon a hill, the hill overlooked the city ; so that He was made a gazing-stock before all.

(b) So in the building of character. As Christians we are eager to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. There is nothing nobler than this aspiration ; yet, to our shame be it said, we are oftentimes loath to acknowledge it. You have seen young artists in the gallery of the Louvre, seated before such masterpieces as “Ecce Homo,” or “The Immaculate Conception,” laboriously copying every line. Did they blush to have it known that they were trying to catch the spirit of the illustrious masters ? Why should we be reluctant to show our earnestness in the imitation of Christ ? There is nothing better than character, and the summit of character is Christ-likeness.

" Howe'er it be, it seems to me,
'Tis only noble to be good."

(c) And furthermore, in Christian service. We are too fearful of being thought over-zealous or fanatical. We have much to say of modest service and of quiet ministry. We lay great emphasis on the Master's words, "And thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet and shut to the door"; and, "When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." There is, indeed, a time to go alone into the trysting-place and to hide our beneficence from human eyes; but there is also a time to brave publicity in doing good. Remember the word of the Lord Jesus, how He said: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

At the battle of Cassova the impetuous Bajazet, seeing a circle of baggage-waggons and kneeling camels arranged as a breast-work, cried out, "Have the sons of Othman ever feared to meet their enemies face to face? Shall we, who have conquered Asia, shelter ourselves behind our camels? Are such artifices worthy of a Divine cause? It is proper to inquire if much of our assumption of modesty is not a mere subterfuge of cowardice. How else shall we account for the

multitude of professed Christians who stand idle in the market-place while the fields are yellow for the sickle? Is it more reprehensible to be a zealot than a good-for-naught? Let us prove our sincerity and earnestness by working in the open. Forth into the midst, O disciples of Christ!

II. "*Stretch forth Thy hand.*" It need scarcely be said that Jesus could have accomplished His purpose without requiring any personal effort on the part of this man. Not only so, but the thing which He demanded was impossible ; for the word rendered "hand" is comprehensive, and includes the entire arm. The man might have answered, "Good Rabbi, how canst Thou say, 'Stretch forth thy hand?' Dost Thou know paralysis? Every nerve and tendon here is atrophied. In vain have I sought to move my arm. If I lift it with my left hand, thus, behold, it falls again as if it were dead. 'Stretch it forth!' Nay, Rabbi, that were impossible : surely Thou mockest me." Nevertheless, it is written, "He stretched it forth." How could that be? "God helps those who help themselves." He makes no unjust exaction. He ever gives power with the effort to obey Him.

Sin is paralysis. Mind, conscience, heart—the whole moral nature is atrophied.

“Our weakness in this emblem, we,
Our total inability
Of doing good, may find.”

Nevertheless, we are required to use mind, conscience, and heart in holy endeavour; and God enables us to do this. Here is the token of His wise goodness: that He makes us, by an infinite condescension, co-labourers with Himself in our restoration and up-building. We dwarf our children, in mistaken kindness, by doing everything for them. God stimulates us by this word, Do for yourself, and I will work with you.

(a) At the beginning of the Christian life we are required to believe. This is the condition of life. Let us say that God could deliver us without any effort of our own; He does not deliver us in that way. No truth of Scripture is clearer than that He has affixed the condition of personal faith to the gift of eternal life. We must stretch forth our hand to accept the gift, else we shall not receive it. God might have healed the serpent-bitten Israelites with a gracious word; He did, indeed, but that word was a call to effort, “Look and live!” Our Lord was pleased to use this as a silhouette of the plan of salvation: “For as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so also must the Son of Man be lifted up; that

whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

(b) And again, in character-building. God could doubtless create a perfect saint in the moment of conversion, were He so disposed; as Minerva is said to have sprung full-armed and panoplied from the forehead of Jove. But, instead, He is pleased to call us into a splendid fellowship with Himself in the working out of character. We are adjured to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, because it is God that worketh in us." It is precisely as when a father sets up his son in business. He buys a stock of goods and says, "Now, my son, I have given you a start; work this out, until you shall make a competence or a fortune for yourself. Meanwhile, I will stand by you; should you be involved in difficulty, call on me." Our conversion is merely a start in the great business of life. God says to us then, Work out your salvation to the very uttermost. For salvation is more than a mere deliverance from the penalty of death; it comprehends all the graces of character, and all the vast possibilities of usefulness. In the attainment of these we are assured that God will co-operate with us. How kind, how gracious, how conducive to the highest development of our own powers, is

this condescension on our Father's part ! How it exalts our manhood to be thus assured that we are "labourers together with God."

(c) And, still further, in Christian service. The same God who caused light to shine in chaos, might, no doubt, at any moment illuminate our sin-stricken world by a similar fiat, "Let there be light !" But instead, He has wisely chosen to use us in the work of His kingdom ; that is, in the restitution of all things. Our Lord said to His disciples, "As the Father hath sent Me into the world, so send I you." And after His crucifixion He returned, and said again, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth ; go ye, therefore, and disciple all the nations." Oh, the riches of the wisdom and grace of God ! Blessed be His name, that He thus dignifies our humanity in calling us into co-partnership with Himself. The world waits for us to appreciate and grasp the high honour. The world lieth in darkness, groaning and travailing, until we shall apprehend not the duty merely, nor the grave responsibility, but the sublime privilege of joining with God in restoring the nations to truth and righteousness, and in bringing in the Golden Age.

Let us be grateful to-day, if the words of our Master have stirred any compunctions within us.

For pain is the antithesis of palsy. Did you ever awake in the middle of the night to find that your arm was asleep? You were alarmed; because you knew that men are sometimes stricken with palsy in the night. You rubbed your arm briskly until you felt a tingling; and then you knew that all was well. "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion." Blessed is the man who feels his infirmity, and deeply longs for a better and nobler life.

Finally, let our awakened energies be newly consecrated to Christ. It is safe to say that, when this man of Capernaum went out of the synagogue he never again thought of his restored hand in the same way. It was thenceforth Christ's hand. It grasped the trowel to do honest work for the Master who had healed it. It ministered to the poor, for Jesus' sake. We profess to be Christians; we are sinners saved by grace. We are healed of impotence, body and soul, hands and feet, by the power of Christ. What shall we say, then? Let us glorify God with our bodies and spirits, which are His.

"Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee!"

THE HANDS OF JESUS

“ And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands.”—
Luke xxiv. 40.

THE HANDS OF JESUS

THE "Art of Palmistry" is compounded of one grain of truth and ninety-nine of artifice ; the only doubt being as to the single grain. The father of the so-called "Art" in its modern form was Lavater, an eccentric priest. The work assigned to him, as a candidate for holy orders, was to stand at the doorway of the chapel, holding a velvet bag for offerings. His eyes were downcast, in pursuance of his vow of humility ; thus he became perforce a close observer of hands. It was indeed a matter of little skill to read the character of the giver in this way. A hand of velvet, plump and unctuous, told unmistakably of worldly ease. A hard, horny hand was indicative of honest toil. A thin hand, armed with talons, said, "Shylock is casting in an alms." It was but clever guesswork.

We need no conjurer's art or artifice for our present task. We are to contemplate the hands

of Jesus. The lessons they teach are plain and simple, and for practical uses.

Observe, first—They were a Man's hands. The crucifixion was over. The disciples were met in the upper room; and the doors were shut “for fear of the Jews.” There were rumours that Jesus had risen from the dead. In this company were certain women, who said that they had seen Him. But some doubted. On a sudden He stood among them, saying, “Peace be unto you.” They were dazed, terrified, supposing it to be His disembodied spirit. Then He said, “Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; handle Me and see; a spirit hath not flesh and bones.” Thus they were convinced that it was the very Jesus who had lived and walked among them.

He was, on earth, a veritable man. He took our nature—not the nature of angels, but of men. A sect arose called the *Docetæ*, who, in order to evade the difficulties of the incarnation, held that the body of Jesus was a phantasm; His alleged humanity was an optical illusion. The truth, however, is that He was flesh of our flesh, our real kinsman, being in all points such as we are, only without sin.

And so He remains for ever. Let us em-

phasize this fact. The incarnation was not a temporary expedient. In the theanthropic person of Jesus there was a perfect union of Godhood with humanity. When He came from heaven to earth He did not empty Himself of His Godhood; nor when He returned from earth to heaven did He lay aside His manhood. His fleshly body was sublimated, etherealized, adjusted to the necessities of the spiritual world; but that fleshly body furnished the seed (1 Cor. xv. 35-57) for His spiritual body; so that He abides through all eternity the God-man. Here is infinite comfort: He remains the first-born among many brethren, the Elder Brother of us all. The true statement of this doctrine, as given in one of our venerable symbols, is this: "The Eternal Son of God became man by taking to Himself a true body and a reasonable soul, and so was and continues to be God and man in two distinct natures and one person for ever."

Second—They were pure hands. "Who shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord? or, who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul to vanity, nor sworn deceitfully." Where shall we find such an one? Is it you?

Is it any of your friends or acquaintance? Nay, there is no difference; "all have sinned." "There is none that doeth good; no, not one." "Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hands?" Jesus claimed an absolute sinlessness. Here is His challenge: "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" Of all the accusations brought against Him, not one impeached the spotless purity of His character and life.

And His claim was strangely conceded. The man who betrayed Him returned to the hall Gazith, where he had received the price of treachery, and casting down the pieces of silver before the rabbis cried, "I have betrayed innocent blood!" The man who sat in judgment over Him, and sentenced Him to death, brought Him out to Gabbatha, the place of judgment, and, in sight of the assembled multitude, said, "I find no fault in Him at all." The centurion who had charge of his execution, looked toward the cross when the tragedy was over, and testified, "Verily, this was a righteous man." Were ever such tributes paid to the virtue of another? Some have, indeed, claimed perfection; but the world has laughed them to scorn. The world has lauded others for their perfection; but they have repudiated it. In Christ alone the

claim and the testimony are united. "Behold the Man!"

Third—They were callous hands. What went ye out for to see? A man with soft, white hands? Nay; such are in kings' palaces and in the mansions of those who can live without labour; or else in the market-places and at the corners of the streets, where idlers say, "The world owes me a living." But Christ belonged to the Third Estate, the honourable company of working men. It is written of Buddha that, at the beginning of his ministry, he left his palace and took his place under the sacred Bo-tree to meditate. On the contrary, Jesus entered a carpenter-shop and became the brother of all who give themselves to labour as the fulfilment of the primal law.

It was now three years since He had crossed the threshold of His shop in Nazareth to engage in the distinctive work of His ministry. But hands that have once known handicraft are marked for ever with its imprint. Once a toiler, always a toiler. Our Lord in heaven is as truly the sympathetic Friend of working men as when He made ploughs for the farmers of Galilee and mended the furniture of the people of Nazareth.

The great problem, destined to be the last

which civilization shall solve, is that between capital and labour. We are addressing ourselves to its solution by such devices as arbitration. So far, so good. But who shall be arbitrator? Pope, or bishop, or archbishop? Nay, call in the Lord and Master of them all. It is greatly to be feared, however, that an objection would be entered against Him on the ground of probable bias. His sleeves were not of lawn. Nevertheless it remains for Him to solve the problem. All classes must be blended, all middle walls of separation broken down, by the application of His Golden Rule: Do unto others as ye would have them do unto you.

Fourth—They were strong hands. Not strong with a mere knotted muscularity, like those of an athlete, disciplined to strike a blow; but hands that spoke of courage and authority, of a perfect physical and moral symmetry.

The right hand of Jesus is the hand of judgment. It is written, "His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into His garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." This is the hand that wrote in Belshazzar's hall, "*Mene, Tekel*"—weighed and found wanting!

This right hand is the hand of a King. It holds

the sceptre of heaven and earth. His enemies put an impotent reed into it, and paraded before Him with mock obeisance, crying, "Hail, King!" They shall see Him reigning in light and glory unapproachable. His sceptre is a right sceptre; his dominion is for ever and ever.

This right hand of Jesus is the hand of salvation. It can pluck a sinner from the depths. It made the worlds, and spun them out upon their orbits in infinite space; a work so great that in celebration of it the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. But that was not His greatest work; indeed, it was no more for Him to frame the worlds than for a lad to blow bubbles into the air. His master-work is Redemption. For this He is represented as "making bare His arm," like a workman about to address himself to a tremendous task.

"'Twas great to call a world from naught,
'Tis greater to redeem."

Fifth—They were friendly hands, the kindest and most helpful. They were ever employed in doing good.

On one occasion He called little children to Him, laid His hands upon them and blessed them, saying, "Suffer them to come unto Me." No

such record is made of any other of the world's illustrious teachers. He loved children ; He recognized the truth, "The child is father to the man."

On another occasion a leper cried, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean !" Jesus approached him. Take heed, good Rabbi, lest Thou come too near ! Here is infection ; here is ceremonial uncleanness. He put forth His hand and touched him, saying, "I will ; be thou clean !" This Man was so pure that soul and body alike were proof against defilement.

On another occasion a demoniac boy was brought for healing. "Thou dumb and deaf spirit," He cried, "come forth !" The lad, rent by the parting demon, fell as dead. And Jesus "took him by the hand, and lifted him up, and he arose." Such is His custom. How many a soul, afflicted once by sin and trouble, can say, "He took me by the hand, He lifted me up !"

The Evangelist in Patmos saw Him in the midst of the golden candlesticks, clothed with a garment of authority, girt with a golden girdle, His face shining like the sun. "And when I saw Him," he writes, "I fell at His feet as dead. Then He laid His right hand upon me, saying, 'Fear not !'" John knew the voice ; he knew the touch of that

right hand. "Fear not!" The trouble of his soul was gone. Here was the Friend on whose bosom he had pillow'd his head in former days.

Sixth—They were wounded hands. It was thus that the prophet Zechariah saw Him five hundred years before His Advent. In amazement he asked, "What are these wounds in Thy hands?" The vision answered, "They are those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends." Let us thrust our fingers into these nail-prints, and be not faithless but believing. They have a wonderful story to tell. They are eloquent of God's love; He so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son to suffer and die for it. They are eloquent of God's justice; as it is written, "Awake, O sword, against My fellow." He so hated sin that, being unable in the nature of the case to overlook it, He must needs send His well-beloved to expiate it in His own body on the tree. They are eloquent of God's wisdom; in all the religions of the world there is no other plan of deliverance from the penalty of a mis-spent life. The blood of Jesus cleanseth; and without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. They are eloquent of God's power; by these wounds we are given to believe that He is able to save even to the uttermost. These hands were nailed to the Cross; but even

there they did not lose their cunning. A thief in penitence cried out, "Remember me!" and Jesus saved him.

He saved the dying thief! The world objects: "Shall a malefactor, who has passed his years in crime, be carried to heaven *in articulo mortis?*" O, mean and grudging world! Cruel, implacable world! Narrow, bigoted world, thus to deny a poor sinner his only chance. Now or never it must be. In an hour this thief will be in eternity, his character fixed, and repentance for ever too late. Blessed be God for His grace; free grace, and unto the uttermost! By the power of His pierced hands let it be known and preached that He rescues thieves and Magdalenes. Nothing is too hard for Him.

Seventh—They were uplifted hands. He stood in the midst of His disciples and blessed them, saying, "Peace be unto you." The last glimpse they caught of Him, as He was received by the opening heavens, He was still stretching out His hands in benediction over them.

Better still, they are uplifted in intercession for us. The high priest, on the Great Day of Atonement, with the names of the tribes written on his breast, entered the Holy of Holies to sprinkle the mercy-seat with blood, and plead for the pardon of

the people's sin. So Christ has entered into the holiest "by a new and living way." Our names are written upon His hands, close to the nail-prints. Thus He makes an all-prevailing plea: O Father, these have sinned; but I have made atonement for them. Behold these wounds in My hands! Let these guilty ones enter into life for My sake. And from all the mercy-seats, the sanctuaries, the trysting-places of earth, is heard an echo of that intercession, "For Jesus' sake."

Arise, my soul, arise,
Shake off thy guilty fears;
The bleeding Sacrifice
In my behalf appears;
Before the throne my Surety stands,
My name is written on His hands.

Five bleeding wounds He bears,
Received on Calvary;
They pour effectual prayers,
They strongly plead for me:—
Forgive him, O forgive, they cry,
Nor let that ransom'd sinner die.

Finally—They are outstretched hands. He stands in an attitude of invitation. The gospel is in this word, "Come." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come." "Come now, saith the Lord, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." "Come unto Me, all ye

that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come ; and let him that is athirst, come ; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Come ! Come ! Come !

His hands are stretched out still. O infinite patience ! "All the day long have I stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." There is still opportunity of closing in with His overtures of mercy. But He will not save us in spite of ourselves. In this He pays tribute to the dignity of our manhood. We are made in the likeness of God, with sovereign wills. We can yield or resist. If He draws us, it must be "with the cords of a man." It takes two to make a covenant. Faith is the condition of salvation. His arm has been made bare for us. His right hand is reached from heaven to save us. Grasp it, and enter into life.

THE SWORD OF GOLIATH

“And David said unto Ahimelech, And is there not here under thine hand spear or sword? for I have neither brought my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king’s business required haste. And the priest said, The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod : if thou wilt take that, take it ; for there is no other save that here. And David said, There is none like that ; give it me.”—*1 Samuel xxi. 8, 9.*

THE SWORD OF GOLIATH

THE sword here mentioned had an interesting story. The armourer who forged it was doubtless advised that no common blade would answer the needs of Goliath of Gath. "Make me a mighty sword," said the giant, "with a hilt to fit this brawny hand, a point for mortal thrust, and a double blade, sharpened like a razor's edge. Make it strong, yet not too heavy; well tempered and pliant, yet not too brittle, lest it snap and betray me; nor yet too soft, lest it turn its edge. In a word, let it be the weapon for a warrior of six cubits and a span."

It hung in the scabbard, strapped to Goliath's thigh, in the valley of Elah, when he proclaimed his challenge to the armies of Israel: "Why are ye come out to set yourselves in battle array? Am not I a Philistine? Choose you a man and let him come down to me!" Day after day, brandishing his spear, he uttered those boastful words; and, lo, all Israel was dismayed. On the

morning of the fortieth day, he saw coming toward him a ruddy youth of a fair countenance, with no weapon but a leathern thong. His pride was affronted. "Am I a dog that thou comest to me with staves?" And he cursed the young athlete by his gods. It was a brave word that rang back across the valley, "Thou comest to me with a sword and with a spear and with a shield, but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts! This day He will deliver thee into my hand, and I will give thy carcass to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel!" And even as Goliath laughed his derision, a smooth stone from the leathern thong smote him, and he fell headlong. Then the youth ran, bent over him, drew the champion's sword from its scabbard, cut off his head; and with the dripping sword in one hand and that gory trophy in the other he returned to Saul's pavilion; while the valley rang with acclamations, "There is a God in Israel!"

In due time the sword of Goliath was placed in the tabernacle, not as a trophy of David's prowess, *but as a thank-offering to God.* It was meet that he should thus express his gratitude, for the battle was the Lord's. He had no reason

to suppose that he would ever see that sword again ; indeed he seems to have quite forgotten it. How many things had happened since he carried it to the Holy Place ! He had known the vicissitudes of life in a palace ; he had distinguished himself on the high places of the field ; he had been driven into exile by his jealous sovereign, and hunted like a partridge over the hills.

He now presented himself at the door of the tabernacle, a lonely fugitive. In his adventurous life he had lost his simple faith. He begged for food. The priest had none to offer but the loaves of shewbread. Necessity knows no law. David satisfied his hunger ; and then, being unarmed, begged for a weapon. The priest said, "The sword of Goliath is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod ; if thou wilt take that, take it ; for there is none other." And David said, "*There is none like that ; give it me.*"

He knew the weapon well. It was a tried and trusty blade. True, an enemy had forged it, and a hostile hand had wielded it ; but David knew its weight, its temper, and the sharpness of its edge. *Experientia docet.* Why shall he not use this weapon now in self-defence ?

Here is our lesson. The adversary has forged

many a sword against us ; we may wield them to our own advantage, by the help of God. The key to a manly career is in knowing how to turn the tables on the enemy. Macaulay says, "The secret of success is to triumph over environment, and prove one's self superior to adverse circumstance." This is possible, if God be with us.

"I like the man who faces what he must
With step triumphant and a heart of cheer ;
Who fights the daily battle without fear ;
Sees his hopes fail, yet keeps unfaltering trust
That God is God ; that somehow, true and just,
His plans work out for mortals ; not a tear
Is shed when fortune, which the world holds dear,
Falls from his grasp ; better, with love, a crust
Than living in dishonour ; envies not,
Nor loses faith in man ; but does his best,
Nor even murmurs at his humbler lot ;
But with a smile and words of hope, gives zest
To every toiler ; he alone is great,
Who by a life heroic conquers fate."

The enemy is digging a pit to ensnare us. Let him dig it deep and wide—the deeper the better ; for, please God, he himself shall fall into it. He is rearing a gallows on which, like Haman, he means to hang us. Let him make it fifty cubits high ; for in God's providence he himself shall dangle from the rope's end. He is forging a

weapon. Let him temper it well and whet it to a razor's edge ; for, by the truth of Jehovah-jireh, he himself shall test the sharpness of it.

I. The sharpest sword that ever was forged against a mortal man is Sin. All have felt it. Where is the man who does not bear its scars ? Some of us can show unhealed wounds. But even sin, fierce and terrible though it be, may be turned upon the foe to our own advantage. For is it not written, "All things work together for good to them that love God" ? But whoever would use this weapon must grasp it aright. There are three conditions ; if we meet them, the victory is ours.

(1) *Confession.* We must admit at the outset that we are sinners. Let there be no mouthing of excuses, nor disguising of the dreadful fact. The Orientals say that when an elephant is about to bathe, he makes muddy the water, that he may not see the deformity of his feet. We are in danger of making our confession in the same way. It is impossible to exaggerate the sinfulness of sin. The iron has entered into our souls. We are under the deserved wrath of God. Let the prayer of David be ours : "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving kindness : according unto the multitude of Thy tender

mercies blot out my transgressions ! For against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned and done evil in Thy sight."

(2) *Absolution.* God has made an abundant provision for our pardon : " The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." There is no reason why any, listening to these words, should for another hour abide under the penalty of the broken law. Christ has been crucified for us. He has borne our sins in His own body on the tree. Look and live ! There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Put away pride and prejudice, and close in with the overtures of mercy. He that believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved ; sin shall have no more power over him.

(3) *Renunciation.* " Go and sin no more." Have the grace to profit by experience. If you have visited Edinburgh Castle, you will remember a path along the precipitous cliff where the enemy climbed up on a dark night and scaled the wall. But only once ; for just there the wall was trebled, and a watch tower set up. - You know your besetting sin. The breach in the wall reveals your immediate duty. Station sentinels there. Be on the watch. Are you prone to avarice, love of

pleasure, unholy ambition, sensuality? Know your infirmity; guard the breach; sin no more.

The man who has attended to these three—confession, absolution, renunciation—is in a coign of vantage, where he may get the better of his sin. The place nearest to the heavenly throne is reserved for those who have fought their way heavenward with this weapon. The angels sing, “Holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!” but sinners saved by grace—the penitent thief, Mary the Magdalene, and a great multitude whom no man can number—sing a sweeter song: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain; for He has redeemed us by His blood and made us to be kings and priests unto God!”

II. *Adversity also is a weapon forged against us.* How shall we regard it? As cowards who lie down and suffer the torrent to overwhelm them? As stoics who say, “What can’t be cured must be endured”? Nay; rather as Christians, who believe that affliction worketh for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Are there hot, fierce fingers clutching at your heart? O the sharpness of pain and disease! But here is the making of manhood. Paul’s thorn in the flesh was “a messenger of Satan, sent to buffet him.” He prayed thrice that it might be

removed, and God answered, "My grace is sufficient for thee." He lived to render thanks for the ministry of that thorn ; saying, "If I must needs glory, I will glory in tribulation ; for when I am weak, then am I strong." It is a true saying, "No affliction for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous ; but in the end it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." Not a few were driven to Jesus during His earthly ministry by their acquaintance with the ills that human flesh is heir to. A great musical critic was asked his opinion of the singing of a young debutante. He said, "It lacks the depth of sorrow, the passion of tears. If I were a young man, I would court her, marry her if possible, maltreat her, break her heart ; and in six months she would be the greatest singer in Europe."

Are you a prisoner of poverty ? Even poverty has its compensations. Our best men are those who have worked their way. There was a penniless lad in Dartmouth, out at knees and elbows, who received from a well-meaning friend a recipe for oiling shoes ; to which he replied grimly, "I would thank you for a recipe to keep out water and gravel-stones." Yet this youth, Daniel Webster, spurred on by difficulty, blazed a way for

himself to a foremost place in the ranks of successful men.

But you have tried and failed? What then? There is deep pathos in the words, "*Receiver's Sale*," above a tradesman's door. It tells of fruitless toil, of anxiety and buffeting, of honest effort come to naught. Nevertheless, defeat may lead to noblest triumph. If Russia is a great power to-day, it is because Peter the Great was defeated two hundred years ago by Charles XII. of Sweden, who marched against him with a paltry twenty thousand. By that event the Czar was stimulated to drill and mobilize his undisciplined armies; and the result is seen in the commanding position of the Russian empire at this day.

The worst of failures is in Christian living. Have you tried there, my brother, and failed? Be not disheartened; to your knees, and make defeat an omen of success. Profit by experience. No man ever failed more ignominiously than the apostle who denied his Lord thrice with a bitter curse. But he never denied Him again. The man of impulse and vacillation, throwing himself at Jesus' feet, rose up the Man of Rock. Our extremity is God's opportunity. His strength is made perfect in our weakness. The sword of the

enemy in a brave hand, backed by a believing heart, is the best of weapons for an earnest life.

III. But what shall be said as to the sharpness of Death? This also is a weapon of Satan's forging. God never meant that we should speak of Death as "the King of Terrors." Were it not for sin, our dissolution would be as peaceful as that of Moses, of whom the Rabbis say, "God kissed away his breath"; as triumphant as that of Elijah, who ascended in a chariot of fire to his heavenly home. We are affrighted at death only because of that which lies beyond. The thought of the Great Day, the possibility of an endless night, appal us. Yet the anticipation of death may be made a mighty stimulus to earnest endeavour and a noble life. How may we thus turn it to advantage?

(1) Face the fact. Why should we be cowards? We are bound to die. Let us feel the edge of this weapon, as Jesus did in Gethsemane. The purple cup which was placed to His lips was full of the horror of death. He trembled as He looked upon it. "O My Father," He prayed, "let this cup pass from Me!" And again, "O My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from Me?" And again, "O My Father, if it be not possible, Thy

will, not Mine, be done." And in appreciation of its full significance, He drank it.

(2) Prepare for it. "The sting of death is sin." Christ came into the world to destroy that sting. Go to the Cross and behold Him conquering death by death; enduring in His own soul its bitterness for you. Go to the open sepulchre and sing your triumph: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

(3) Do your appointed work. There is no time to waste. "Say not, There are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest; lift up your eyes and see; behold, the fields are already white unto the harvest." There is character to build; there is good to be done; there is trouble to assuage; there are souls to save; there are strongholds of evil to be broken down.

"Make haste, O Man, to live,
For thou so soon must die;
Time hurries past thee like the wind—
How swift its moments fly!"

Do your work; do it well; do it now. "The King's business requireth haste." And you shall face the great mystery at last, as Paul did, with

joyful anticipation. He had ended his journeys among the Macedonian hills ; he had finished his preaching in cities, in synagogues, and in prisons. What more remained ? " I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand ; I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith ; there is, henceforth, laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give to me at that day ! "

Thus we learn the lesson of Goliath's sword. All things work together for our good. We win our triumphs with arrows from the quiver of the enemy. Samson's riddle is solved ; " Out of the eater cometh forth meat, and out of the strong cometh forth sweetness."

And here, as everywhere, Christ is our example. The Cross was intended for His overthrow. It was called " the accursed tree." But Christ assumed it, bore it patiently, triumphed over it, and is now conquering the world with it. The cross gleams on innumerable spires, is worn as an amulet over the hearts of believers, and stands in history as a Divine symbol of victory.

" In the Cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o'er the wrecks of time."

It is probable that when David left the taber-

nacle that day, grasping the sword of Goliath, he lay down to rest in a lonely place. He placed the sword beside the stone which served as his pillow, and kept his hand upon it. In the watches of that night memory was busy. It seemed but yesterday that he had gone forth against the champion of Gath. He heard again the challenge ring across the valley. He remembered the prayer with which he winged the smooth stone as it flew from the leathern thong. He heard the shouts of the Israelites as he bent above his fallen foe. He felt again the grateful pride with which he had presented himself at the royal pavilion. And, alas ! he bitterly recalled his forgetfulness of Divine mercy. He had wandered on the dark mountains far from God. When he awoke, his hand was still upon Goliath's sword ; he drew it from the scabbard and looked along the blade. Was it rusted with blood ? It seemed as if the weapon had been reforged while he slept. What is this that he reads upon it ? "There is a God in Israel." This should henceforth be to him not the sword of Goliath, but the sword of the Lord. And he arose in newness of faith and went upon his way.

If God be upon our side, my friends, the weapon has never been forged that can hurt or destroy us. If God be for us, who shall be against us ? All

hope of success lies there. Look upon the giant's sword again. Read there the Divine promise : " All things work together for good to them that love God." All things ! Aye, pardoned sin, sorrow, and death's sharpness, all must serve thee. Go forth in this thy might. Be strong ; be of good courage ; for the sword of Goliath has become for thee " the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

OUR CONFIDANT

“And they went and told Jesus.”—*Matt.* xiv. 12.

OUR CONFIDANT

AT first glance there is no more repellent figure than that of John the Baptist. Gaunt, cadaverous, clothed in camel's hair, and bound about the loins with a hempen girdle, a face browned by the suns of the wilderness, deep eyes flaming in cavernous sockets, a voice with the roll of muffled thunder in it. Yet not infrequently such men as he are the centre of a coterie of most devoted friends. Their very sternness has a strange attractive power. So it was with Peter the Hermit, so with Savonarola. No leader ever had a more devoted following than John the Baptist. His disciples were bound to him as with hooks of steel.

Then came Jesus of Nazareth, to whom John himself pointed with the words: "Behold the Lamb of God!" The tide of popularity turned thereupon from John to Jesus, and the Man of Nazareth was followed by an ever-increasing multitude who heard Him gladly. John's disciples

were filled with envy, and said : "Master, behold, He to whom thou didst bear witness baptizeth, and all men come unto Him." John replied, in a rare spirit of abnegation : "The friend of the bridegroom rejoiceth greatly because he heareth the bridegroom's voice. Said I not, I am not the Christ ? He must increase and I must decrease." So John grew smaller and smaller as time passed, and the figure of the Nazarene Prophet filled an ever greater place in current events.

Then John was arrested and thrust into the castle of Machærus. His disciples still clung to him. To and fro they passed between Machærus and the Jordan where Jesus was teaching. One day beneath the castle walls they called their master's name, and there was no answer. "Where is he ?" "Dead !"

Dead ? It was a hideous tale. It seems Herod had a wife who did not belong to him, and John had reproved him, saying plainly : "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." John knew Herod for a coward, but he must reckon with Herodias. Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned. She nursed the adder in her breast and bided her time. There came a banquet, and her daughter Salome danced before the court. O shame ! a descendant of the Asmonæan princes !

And she danced their senses away. Herod in his drunken enthusiasm cried : " Ask what thou wilt, even to the half of my kingdom, and thou shalt have it." She ran to her mother, and returning said : " Here, forthwith, the head of John the Baptist on a charger ! "

It is written, " The king was exceeding sorry "; but, alas ! he was frenzied with drink. The order was given. It was night. Up the stone stairway, lantern in hand, went the executioner ; John heard his footsteps approaching. The deed was done in secrecy. The executioner lifted the head by its sable hair and, placing it on a royal dish, brought it into the audience hall. It was a sight to haunt one's dreams. The tongue was still, and yet it seemed to say with a voice that nevermore would be hushed : " It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." The light in those fierce eyes was quenched, but Herod saw them many and many a time in the watches of the night, flaming down upon him. " Mene ! Tekel ! Upharsin ! " Conscience makes cowards of us all. Away with the gory thing, and fling the body over the battlements to the dogs !

But the disciples of John came and took up the body—the poor thin body, so lean with long fasting—lifted it tenderly, saying one to another : So

true, so fearless ! Alas ! alas ! And they buried it. Then what ? Did they go to Herod complaining of his tyranny ? Too late ; the deed was done. Did they meet by the banks of Jordan to mingle their tears ? Nay, every familiar spot by the Jordan spoke to them of the hushed voice and the vanished presence. Whither should they go ? *“They went and told Jesus.”* They had learned His truth and tenderness. They could confide in Him.

Are you in trouble ? There is One that sticketh closer than a brother. He is a friend in fair weather and foul. Our religion is in its last reduction a personal relation to Him. Hear His word of promise : “I will not leave you comfortless.” “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”

Are you brought down into the valley of tears ? Is there crape on the door ?

Enters to-day

Another body in churchyard sod,

Another soul on the life in God ?

His Christ was buried—and lives alway :

Trust Him, and go your way.

A man can bear any sorrow when his Lord Jesus stands by. It was a dark night when Oliver Cromwell lay dying ; the tempest shook the win-

dows of his room. He said to his wife : "Read me Paul to the Philippians." When she came to the place where it is written : "I know how to be full and how to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer want. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," he said : "Stop there. That was the word that saved me when our lad Oliver went his way ; that is the word that, above the roar of the tempest, shall cheer me now." There are times indeed when nothing else will answer ; when the sympathy of earthly friends is but as vinegar on nitre. But the compassion of Jesus is infinitely helpful, for it has omnipotence behind it.

But there are sorrows deeper and darker than death. There are home troubles with which no stranger may intermeddle,—so black and bitter that wife and husband can scarcely speak of them to each other. The "skeleton in the closet"—what a significant phrase that is ! A locked door, a white, ghastly, rattling thing behind it ; never dragged to light, but always there, always there ! A scapegrace boy, a scandal touching the family name, the memory of an unexpiated crime—these are experiences that human friendship cannot touch. To bear them alone is to eat one's heart out. There is only One who can help now. Go,

tell it to Jesus. He not only asks us to take His yoke upon us, but He promises also to take our yoke upon Him.

Or is yours a more sordid trouble? We are living in hard times, when the rich and the poor draw near together, and adversity is master of all. I know of no sadder sight than a pawnbroker's window in these days. We laugh and speak slightly about "our uncle." But, oh, it is a frightful pleasantry! I stood before such a window yesterday, and this is what I saw: a ring, among others, and two names within it; a mandolin; a life-saver's medal; diamonds; a case of surgical instruments; a gambler's outfit; a revolver; an India shawl. It is an easy matter to read the story between the lines,—shame and anguish, broken vows, the wolf howling at the door, vice and misery. God pity us, these are everywhere in these days. And blessed is the man who has a helpful friend. "We should have gone under long ago," said a merchant to me recently, "had it not been that our senior partner has resources to draw on." It is an excellent thing to have such a partner in times like these. The Lord Christ has infinite resources to draw on.

But there is another side. There are some who have never tasted sorrow. Do they need Him?

Dr. William Jay was once surprised to receive in his pulpit a note asking for "prayers for a man in prosperity." If the prosperous knew the dangers that beset their path, such requests would be more common than they are. Near the head of Wall Street the other day I saw a placard hanging from a beggar's neck, and read its legend, "Pity the poor." But what about these men going up and down the busy thoroughfare bearing the marks of good fortune? Ah, pity the rich! They are so absorbed in the cares of this present world that they hear no songs over their heads. Their eyes are so intent upon the yellow dust at their feet that they see not the gates of pearl open above them. Pity the prosperous! If you are blessed with an abundance of this world's goods, if adversity has never transfixed you, by all means make now the acquaintance of this Confidant. Tell Him your pleasures, and let Him participate in them.

It is not fair to shut Him out. If you expect Him to weep with you in sorrow, shall you not also invite Him to make merry with you? It is but a one-sided covenant that covers the night and not the day. If there is a funeral at your home, He knocks, and you say: "Come in, Lord; come in and condole with me." If the meal is low in

the barrel and the cruse is empty of oil, He knocks, and you say: "Come in, Lord, and supply my need." But if there is the sound of merry voices and tinkling feet, what then? He draws near and cries: "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man open the door, I will come in, and sup with him." But the music and laughter are ringing in your ears, and you cannot hear Him!

There never was a marriage like that of Cana of Galilee at which Jesus was a guest. His pure heart was full of the sweetness of the hour; and when the bride and bridegroom joined their hands amid congratulations and good wishes, no guest had cheerier words to say than this Friend from Nazareth, who lifted His hands and laid His blessing upon them. What promise was theirs as they passed under the rainbow arch bearing this benediction of the Son of God!

One reason why we hesitate to receive this Divine Friend into our pleasures is because we have our misgivings as to their quality oftentimes. Yet this is the way to solve the "amusement question." Do nothing that you cannot pray over. You need the Lord Christ always and everywhere.

It is not wise to shut Him out, our pleasures are so near to pain. The *élite* of Paris who gathered in the charity bazaar not long ago arrayed in

their laces and broadcloth, had no thought of calamity. What means the clanging of yonder bell? The cry is heard, "Fire! Fire!" and in scarcely more time than we have taken to relate it, the frail structure is consumed. The laughter is turned into mourning. Summon the ambulance; gather up the ashes; scores on scores have rushed into eternity! So close together lie pain and pleasure, on the border-line of eternity.

But there is another hour in human experience when none but Christ can help us,—the hour of spiritual doubt. I suppose there are some who have no doubts; who live in such a serene and blessed atmosphere that they entertain no question as to the eternal verities. They are like birds that fly so high above the earth that the dust never falls upon their wings. But I confess to another experience. There are moments when sweetest spiritual communion is broken in upon, as if by the voice of the adversary, with such suggestions as, "Are you sure there is a God? Are you sure that death does not end all?" These are but momentary interruptions of the blessed life of faith; but while they last they are unspeakably painful. I can recall one period in my life when for weeks together I could make no prayer but this: "Lord, I believe; help Thou

mine unbelief." But alas for a man who in such moments cannot speak with the Lord of life, who cannot look upward out of his deep midnight into the clear shining of the sky above him.

If you have doubts, go tell them to Jesus. Do not confer with other doubters. Do not seek counsel of sceptics and scoffers. Do not plunge into your books of radical philosophy. Go make a clean breast of all to Him who said, "I am the light of the world." He can dispel doubt. As our spiritual Physician He can meet our case; but we must tell Him all. If, having a dreadful sinking of the heart, I go to an earthly physician, he will feel my pulse and take my temperature and ask me one question after another until I say, "I have a strange sinking of the heart." Then he exclaims, "That alters the case; why did you not tell me? I know now what ails you." If we are going to the mercy-seat at all, let us not go wearing a false face. Let us not try to make it appear to our Lord Jesus that we are better than we really are. The only way to get the blessing is to tell Him all. We speak of "Doubting Thomas." I see no reason for that appellative. He was no more a doubter than the other disciples; his fault lay, not in refusing to believe—for they all had declined

to believe until they saw the risen Christ—but in being absent from the prayer meeting on a certain night. They told him they had seen the Christ with the marks of His anguish upon Him. “I will not believe until I also have seen Him; until I have seen His wounds and thrust my hand into His side.” The time came when the Lord met him upon that very basis of faith. As the disciples were met in the upper room, He stood suddenly in the midst, and turning to Thomas said, “Behold, the nail-prints in My palms; reach hither thy hand and thrust it into My side, and be not faithless but believing.” And Thomas cried, “My Lord and my God!”

So long as we walk by faith, there must be a possibility of doubt; but when the moment comes, and we stand in the night surrounded by doubts that taunt and hiss at us, let us remember that we have a Friend who dwells in the glory of absolute verity, and who is ready at our call to help us. Meanwhile, stand fast! You are a foolish man if you leap from the carriage when your horses are running away. Get hold of the reins if you can; but in any case stay there. Do not give way in the stress of the adversary’s assault, but abide the coming of your Friend; He will bring the morning with Him.

But there is another experience, deepest and most dismal of all—conviction of sin. At this point we are all alike. As the Scotch say, “We are a’ John Thompson’s bairns.” Or as Paul says: “We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God.”

Sin is an awful thing. Let us not minimize it. The possibility of hell-fire is in it—the fire that is never quenched, the worm that dieth not, the outer darkness, exile from God.

We have repeatedly been told by Biblical scholars that there is a question as to the authenticity of the story of the woman taken in adultery. I am glad that narrative is in the new version. The revisers, among whom were the most learned of Biblical expositors, weighed the question *pro* and *con* exhaustively, and concluded that the story should remain. For this many souls will rejoice. No part of Scripture comes closer to personal experience. The Rabbis hurled her down upon the marble floor of the temple, and looking to Jesus said: “Moses in the law requireth that such as she shall be stoned; but what sayest Thou?” All clamoured for her death; two only in that company were silent, Jesus—who wrote with His finger in the dust: “Let him that is without sin cast the first stone

at her"—and the woman herself. Was she penitent for her sin? Her crouching form that shook with sobs, cried, *Peccavi*. Her crimson face, which she vainly sought to cover with her hands, cried, *Miserere! Miserere!* Her whole attitude was confession; His whole attitude was compassion. "Go, and sin no more!" So He sent her forth into a new life of hope and virtue.

Aye, but we are not like her. No? "God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people, or even as this woman?" Ah, "we are a' John Thompson's bairns!" "There is no difference." It is the fact of sin, and neither its quality nor its quantity, that brings us into enmity against law. And there is only One who can heal and comfort us. There is only One in all the world who can say: "Son, daughter, thy sins be forgiven thee."

I want a friend, you want a friend. There is no sorrow deeper than friendlessness. An old writer says, "Friends are like shadows; some like the shadow cast by the sun, and others like the shadows cast by moon and stars." But there are times when there is no shadow. There are nights when the moon and stars go out. Then there is one Friend who stands by us in the blackness of darkness.

At this moment there is a man somewhere sitting at his desk with his face in his hands, a half-written note beside him, and a pistol. The papers will tell it to-morrow. And somewhere there is a wild-eyed woman walking by the river-side, the fire of despair burning in her eyes ; and from the still depths of the river the sirens sing and beckon. The papers will tell it to-morrow. Oh, that they knew ! Oh, that the friendless knew the comfort that the Lord Christ can give !

“I’ve found a Friend ; oh, such a Friend !
So kind, and true, and tender,
So wise a Counsellor and Guide,
So mighty a Defender !
From Him who loves me now so well,
What power my soul can sever ?
Shall life, or death, or earth, or hell ?
No ! I am His for ever !”

THE STORY OF AN OUTCAST

“And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when He was come out of the ship, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs ; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains : because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces : neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.”—*Mark v. 1-5.*

THE STORY OF AN OUTCAST

IT had been a busy day. The Lord had been teaching in parables to the people on the beach at Capernaum, and had wrought many miracles of healing. He was weary. As the day wore on He looked across the lake to the green slopes of Gadara, and longed for rest and a breath of the country air. "Let us go over," He said to His disciples, "to the other side." Not without misgivings—for there were signs of an approaching storm—they pushed out. The Master lay down in the stern of the little boat, with His head on the pilot's pillow, and fell asleep.

Look at Him now! We have a High Priest that can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." "He took not on Him the nature of angels"—but of men.

On a sudden the wind came roaring through the deep ravines on the eastern side of the lake, and whipped the water into a foaming tempest. The fishermen sprang to the shrouds. Only one

was unconcerned—the Sleeper. They wakened Him. “Carest Thou not, Master, that we perish?” He arose, looked into their scared faces, then out upon the troubled sea. He lifted His hands, and with the quiet voice of one conscious of power, said, “Peace, be still.” The winds went moaning to their caverns; the waves fell sobbing asleep!

It was a wondrous thing. Who but the Almighty Son of God could have wrought this miracle? Canute, the Dane, attempted it; standing on the heights, when the storm was beating against the rocks beneath, he cried, “Be still!” and the tempest laughed at him. Xerxes, the Persian, tried it; commanding his courtiers to place his throne upon the beach, he said to the flowing tide, “No further!” But it drew nearer, nearer, until it lapped his feet, and they carried him back, and proceeded by his orders to lay a penalty of three hundred lashes on the irreverent sea. Akbar, the Saracen, thought to do it; he spurred his horse down into the water, calling out defiance to old Neptune; fetlock deep, knee deep, now to the saddle girth, when the horse, wiser than his rider, turned and fled shoreward, and old Neptune roared after him. But Jesus of Nazareth calmed the stormy sea with a word.

However, we are to see a greater miracle than

this. The little boat has touched the strand. The stern anchor is thrown, the bow made fast. Look yonder! What creature is that? A man? a demon? His hair flying, his clothes torn from him, his face distorted, foam issuing from his lips; muttering, shrieking out blasphemy, rattling a broken chain from his uplifted arms! Let us fasten our eyes on him as he runs furiously this way, for here is the power of sin—the monstrous power of sin!

Time was when yonder demoniac was a babe on his mother's breast; she fondled his chubby hands, kissed his lips, looked down into his sweet blue eyes, and dreamed a mother's dream. Then he was a merry lad; his laughter ringing clear as he mingled with his playmates in the village street.

—“Life went a-Maying
With Nature, Hope and Poesy,
When he was young.”

And then a young man with all a young man's hopes and aspirations. What possibilities of honour and influence awaited him! But some evil power met him. Was it a siren, with a sweet alluring voice? Was it a fiend, with a crimson cup in hand? He yielded, and fell, and yonder he is. In him let us behold what sin can do—

nay, rather what sin in its approach to ripeness is ever bound to do.

We need in these days a deeper apprehension of this awful truth. The reason why men do not all hunger and thirst for salvation is because they are not sufficiently sensible of sin. The truth with all its dread significance is not pressed upon them. The sick must know their malady before they are willing to call a physician. Conviction precedes conversion. The needle of the law must enter the soul before the thread of the gospel.

It will not be unprofitable for us, therefore, to study in this miserable victim the full effects of sin.

I. *Sin had unlawed this man.* "He could not be bound, no, not with chains. He could not be tamed."

In the controversies of the early Church a word was used to characterize sin which has since passed out of use, and we have no other which precisely takes its place; to wit, *anomia*, which may be rendered, "unlawry." Sin and law are opposites. Sin is trespass, transgression, climbing a fence, intruding upon a preserve, breaking open a bolted door, a protest against restraint in any form.

Man was originally created under law; he was a normal being. He lived in an atmosphere of

obedience. He moved in calm conformity with the laws of his own being. In such condition he was absolutely and ideally free. For freedom is defined to be perfect obedience to perfect law.

He fell. Fell from what? From law. He lost something. What? His freedom. And what did he gain instead? License, lawlessness, aversion to restraint; that is to say, sin. Some are fond of characterizing this acquisition as personal freedom; meaning by that, the liberty to defy God and the rights of one's fellow-men. It is in pursuance of this perverted sense of freedom that assaults are made upon our Sabbath laws, our temperance laws, our marriage laws, and all rules and regulations which are intended to conserve our happiness and prosperity in social life. Here the demon of sin clothes himself in the name of freedom, and appears as an angel of light. He pours forth philippics against law and order. His other name is Anarchy. He was seen at his worst and ripest in that famous Haymarket meeting in Chicago where, amid the hissing of bombs, the cry arose: "Throttle the law!"

II. Sin had unshamed this man. His clothes were torn from him. He was heedless of the common decencies of life.

There is a form of sin which one is reluctant

even to mention to polite ears ; but it must needs be. It stares at us from the dead walls in painted placards, and from the windows of photographers' establishments along the thoroughfares. It looks us boldly in the face from our illustrated periodicals, and utters its vile pleasantries in the daily papers. It assumes the form of advanced culture on the walls of our art galleries. This is nothing new. It is as old as Satan. The same sort of "culture" frescoed the walls of Pompeii with cartoons that made that city the reproach of the old-time world. And God looked down upon it with eyes of flaming fire. At His command the ashes of Vesuvius were belched forth over that iniquitous city, and buried it from the sight of men.

This form of sin is conspicuous in much of our current literature. It is estimated that more than one-half of the English novels issued during the past year have presented as their heroines for public consideration, a class of persons so disreputable that no self-respecting man or modest woman would for a moment think of saluting them if they were to spring into life and pass along the street. What a procession of "living pictures" with Trilby at their head ! And many of us, the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus,

men and women professing to honour the things that are "pure and lovely and of good report," have welcomed them into the sanctity of our home-life!

And the drama? It is not necessary just now to avert to the question whether or no it is right to attend the theatre. Let it suffice to say that at this moment, by common consent, there are almost no plays presented in New York which can be witnessed with impunity by people of clean character. The contagion has seized not only on the concert halls and vaudeville resorts, but upon the two or three theatres which have hitherto assumed to be respectable. Within a stone's throw of this pulpit, in the play-house which has hitherto been assigned to the highest place of virtuous trustworthiness, there is a play on the boards of such a character that a man or woman witnessing it, while able to preserve an "anatomical virtue," can by no stretch of the imagination remain morally pure. One such spectacle as that rubs off the bloom of the peach.

In answer to such observations as this it is customary to remark, "To the pure all things are pure." Dirt is dirt anywhere and everywhere. Obscenity is obscenity. No admixture of anti-septic can change a dish of offal into a lemon-ice.

It is impossible to take pitch into the bosom and not be defiled. Avoid it, therefore; pass by on the other side; go not near it.

III. Furthermore, *sin isolated this man*. "He made his dwelling among the tombs."

Here were ghosts gibbering by moonlight; but he was not afraid. His proper home was among the dead. Here were the sepulchres of hope and promise and noble aspiration all about him. Dust and ashes of the past. A place of solitude and barrenness. He could see the village just yonder, hear the echo of its laughter and the hum of its industry. But he had no part or lot in it. By night he saw the lights kindling in the windows. One light yonder in the window of his own home, where wife and children were; but he had no business there. That was a village full of honest folk; he had ruled himself out. Sin always rules us out, robs us of the sweets of fellowship, shuts us up to selfish envy and jealousy, drives us along to our own place. The sorrow of perdition lies in those words, "outer darkness." The soul exiled to wander there is not excluded from heaven by closed gates, for heaven's gates are always open; he is shut out by his own character—fixed, formulated, crystallized in his earthly life. He is here among congenial associations. There is only one

place in the universe that would be more dismal than hell to him, that is heaven ; because he has disqualified himself for it. If he draws near to an open gate he hears the voice of prayer, but prayer is not for him ; he hears the voice of singing—

“All hail the power of Jesus’ name !
Let angels prostrate fall.”

But what sympathy has he with that coronation song ? If God were to send forth His angels and archangels to constrain that poor soul to enter in, he would run shrieking to the furthest caves of night. He can never be at home save in his own place. “For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.”

IV. *Sin made this man injurious to himself.*
“He cut himself with stones.”

We are accustomed to say of a man who is under the dominion of some tyrannical passion that he is his own worst enemy. But the sin in any man antagonizes his best interests ; it robs him of all that makes life worth living, and, in the long run, when it is finished it “bringeth forth death.”

A plant flourishes so long as it lives in harmony with the laws that environ it ; the moment it dis-

obeys, refuses to assimilate the dew or sunlight, or turns aside from any of the rules of its being, it begins to wither and fade. The soul that defies the moral laws that are interwoven with its very being proceeds along the same path. Any form of transgression is self-injurious. He that sinneth against God wrongeth his own soul. It is not easy to perceive in the earlier stages of sin, when it assumes the form of stolen pleasure, this sure tendency towards death. But the tendency is there ; and as sure as gravitation in the natural world.

I recall five scenes in the life of a young man whose face comes to me from the days of my early youth. I saw him first with his sleeves rolled up, at work in the hay field. He was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. He was pointed out as an industrious young man, but with wild ways. I saw him again as I looked through the windows of a gilded gin palace ; he was standing with a group of well-dressed men before the bar, his matted hair fallen upon his forehead, his hat thrown back, a half empty glass before him. I saw him again reeling through the street, out at elbows now, reeling along the downward way. I saw him again with his face against the barred window, his eyes red and wild, seeing phantoms.

He had reached *mania a potu*. I saw him once more laid out for his burial ; his face black and bloated, his mother bowed down with both her arms around him, kissing that poor face. His sin was "finished" ; it had killed him.

V. *Sin made this man injurious to others* ; as St. Luke says, " Travellers could not pass that way."

We are all depending upon one another in this world. We are all travelling along by the way of the tombs, hoping to reach some better place. It is our business to help each other, to bear one another's burdens, to relieve one another of pain and weariness, to make life tolerable and, if possible, happy for all. But, alas ! sin makes us selfish and envious and injurious. Under its malignant power we are unsafe friends and comrades. We hurt where we should help. We increase the burden where we should lighten it.

If a man could die unto himself alone ; if he could waste his life, squander his energies and go out alone into the eternal night, that would be sufficiently dreadful—but that is not the worst. No man can die unto himself. A train follows after him. The sins of which he has been guilty are as stumblingblocks over which other souls fall and perish.

Last Thursday a man under the influence of

liquor came to his home on Fifty-third Street. He was not a bad man ordinarily as drunkards go, but, being out of work, he had for weeks yielded to his besetting sin. His wife not being at home to welcome him, he walked up and down the room in anger. His only child, an infant of nine months, lay sleeping on the couch. His wife, who had gone out perhaps to earn a little bread, threw open the door, and faced him. He began to curse her, and in a moment seized his child, and threw the little one at its mother with such violence that it struck her and fell upon the floor dead ! It is bad enough that he should now be shut up in a prison cell to contemplate his awful crime under the shadow of a gallows tree. But think of the consequences that his sin entails—a deserted home, a murdered child, a wife broken-hearted, worse than widowed, doomed to shame wherever she goes. If he die upon the gallows, will that end it ? Nay, the ghost of his iniquity will still live, to drive, as with a whip of scorpions, other souls to follow in his steps.

We shall all agree probably that the case made against sin in the person of this demoniac is bad enough. It is not with sin in him, however, that we have to do. It is of no profit to look on sin yonder at a distance as an objective thing.

The theft of the little ewe lamb did indeed arouse the indignation and wrath of King David when he heard it; but a conviction deeper than that, and more salutary, came when the prophet pointed his finger and cried, "Thou art the man!" We have practically to do, not with sin in this demoniac of Gadara, but with sin as it is in ourselves —in you and in me; for there is not one among us who can plead innocence. The best we can say is, that sin, as yet, is not finished in us; but we all shall fall upon our knees to-night if we are honest men and women, and confess before God: "I have sinned and done evil in Thy sight." If sin have indeed in itself such potency and possibility as we have been contemplating, shall we not cry out: "Who shall deliver us from the body of this death? Who shall deliver me?"

The little boat has been waiting during this meditation by the beach at Gadara. The demoniac with hideous cries hastens this way. The Man of Nazareth, conscious of His power, is not affrighted. He faces the sinner and his sin, and cries: "Come out of him!" A moment later the man lies sobbing at His feet. We shall see him presently clothed, and in his right mind.

It is glorious to think in the presence of such an awful scourge as sin, that there is One mightier

than sin—One that has power on earth to forgive sin. Nay, more, He has power to deliver from the bondage of sin. If ever there was a desperate case it was that of this demoniac. All entreaties and remonstrances had been vain. Law, penalty, fetters, and manacles had been futile. His friends had given him up.

But did you never observe how Jesus loved to deal with desperate cases? If a paralytic were brought to Him, it was only when all the poor victim's money had been wasted on physicians, and his last strength and resource were all gone, and he could by no means lift himself up. If a leper presented himself, it was in the last stages of his disease, when his fingers were dropping from their joints. Or, perhaps, Jesus was called to a desolated home, from which the dear one had been carried out four days ago to his burial, so that corruption had already seized upon him. But here lay His great strength. He knew no hopelessness. Nothing was impossible to Him. He healed them every one! Oh, His name is "The Mighty to Save!"

If there is a man who feels himself so wholly under the power of a long-cherished habit that he has surrendered all hope of deliverance, to him the Lord Jesus speaks the word of hope. If there is

a mother whose scapegrace boy has gone off into the far country and wasted his substance, whom no maternal love or entreaty has been able to reach, to her this Omnipotent Son of God speaks the word of hope. Bring your loved one to Jesus ; He is able to save unto the uttermost.

The old cobbler who laid his hand upon the shoulder of an inebriate, who was staggering through the streets of Nantucket long ago, saying kindly, "John, there is One that can help you," wrought better than he dreamed. For those words had in them the ring of new strength and comfort, and John B. Gough lived to testify for forty glorious years to the power of the One that had helped him.

There is help here. There is help nowhere else. Jesus is Master of sin. All others are in less or greater measure servants of sin. He has power to forgive. He has power to deliver. "He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him."

THE STORY OF AN OUTCAST—THE
SEQUEL

“ And they see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind.”—*Mark v. 15.*

THE STORY OF AN OUTCAST—THE SEQUEL

IT is said that when the demoniac came into the village and told the strange thing that had happened, "all men did marvel." And no wonder! If a man is disposed to reject the supernatural, he will find difficulties innumerable in this narrative.

(1) There, to begin with, is the suggestion of a personal devil.

There are many excellent people who decline to believe anything of the sort. Sin, indwelling corruption, an evil principle—aye, by all means. But a personal devil—they will have none of it. There was a time when I disbelieved in that particular form of highway robbery known as "garrotting." But one morning an old acquaintance came in to tell me that he had been garrotted on the previous night, and showed me in evidence a purple mark around his neck. There was no reasoning against that.

In like manner there are multitudes of people

who bear about in their bodies the marks of a personal devil — stigmata that can scarcely be traced to an impersonal principle.

(2) Demonianism or demoniacal possession.

Here is another difficulty which some are disposed to circumvent by assigning the phenomenon to the category of mere physical maladies. But this will not answer. The Lord Jesus Christ had come into the world to deliver it from the bondage of sin. In other words, He was making an invasion upon the realms of the Prince of Darkness. Was it to be expected that the ruler of this world would allow his sovereignty to slip out of his hands without making a desperate effort to retain it? Demonianism was the outward token of this tremendous conflict at close quarters. The Son of God stood alone as the knight-errant of the fallen race ; His adversary summoned all the hosts of the nether world to his aid. As God was expressing Himself in the incarnate form of Jesus of Nazareth, so the Prince of Darkness must needs oppose Him through mortal agency. Therefore the emissaries of evil entered in and took possession wherever the door of a human heart lay open. All heaven and hell stood looking on. And whenever this Jesus met His adversary hand to hand, it was as when Samson met the lion on the way

to Timnath: "He rent him as he would have rent a kid."

(3) There is a difficulty also in the matter of the swine. Yet nothing in the narrative is more reasonable than this. Where else could the unclean spirits have found a refuge so congenial? See the swine yonder, seeking their sustenance among the offal heaps. At the word of commission the unclean spirits take possession of them; then a sudden panic in the herd. They are rolling in the mire, uttering strange half-human cries, jostling one another, plunging headlong down the declivity, and so into the water. Then a mighty commotion; they are struggling, strangling, drowning! They have left naught behind them but bubbling confusion and widening, vanishing circles. All is over. The unclean spirits have gone to their own place, and they have gone in their own way. This was their fitting end.

(4) The most serious difficulty of all, however, in the narrative, is the strange transformation in this man. There is nothing so marvellous in all the metamorphoses of Ovid. An hour ago we saw him running down the cliffs toward the lake, naked, hands uplifted, rattling a broken chain, foaming at the lips, and shouting forth obscene blasphemies. Now here he lies, bound as chains

never could bind him ; tamed as laws could never tame him ; transformed by the power of the Son of God !

We saw him under the power of sin—a hard task-master. It is related of Scirion, the robber, that he kept his captives always four days. On the first they were entertained with lavish hospitality at his table ; on the second they were required to wash his feet and those of his robber band ; on the third they were confined in a prison cell ; on the fourth they were brought to the edge of a precipitous cliff and pushed into the sea. And therein we mark the downward steps of sin. It begins with self-indulgence ; the feast of stolen pleasures.

“ Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee
Jest and youthful Jollity,
Quips, and cranks, and wanton wiles,
Nods, and becks, and wreathéd smiles,
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides ! ”

Next come the menial services of vice—the loss of self-respect, license, the gratification of the lower nature and sensuality.

Then bondage : “ For, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of it.”

And finally death. The cup is drunk to its

dregs ; there remains only enough to betray the fact that all along we have been partaking of slow poison. Death—spiritual and eternal death. Come, Shame, Regret, Remorse, Despair, Retribution, and push him out into the night ! Probation is past ; eternity begins. “ He that is unjust let him be unjust still.”

The demoniac of Gadara had reached the last and most portentous chapter of his guilty life, and was being pushed by all the furies headlong down to death, when he met—Oh, would to God that all who are in like extremity might meet Him too—the mighty Son of God ! At His word of command the furies fled, and the unclean spirits abandoned their prey.

Mark now the stupendous change. He lies prone before Jesus, trembling in every sinew, and sobbing out his mingled grief and gratitude. John, Peter, lend a hand ! Wash his open wounds, and anoint them. Break off this clanking chain ! Andrew, cast thy tunic over him, and give him a little parched corn from thy girdle, with a drink of cool water from the lake ! Now raise him up !

This is conversion. The schoolmen might call it regeneration, but regeneration is the Divine side of the great change, and we have practically nothing to do with it. But conversion is a turning

about. We turn about under the power of God. Our backs to the darkness ; our faces to the light. Our backs to the world, the flesh, and the devil ; our faces toward God and the endless life. This is a revolutionary change. It is not a mere veneering, but runs through and through the human fabric. A man may turn over a new leaf ; but as to his being made over again—that can only be done when he submits himself to God. A heart disease cannot be healed with a fly-blister. “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord.” The change in this demoniac has been wrought from above. He is a new creature in Christ Jesus ; new will, new heart, new conscience, new life. “Old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new.”

Observe some of the tokens of this change :—

I. *He is “clothed.”* That is to say, he has regained his self-respect, and with it a respect for the courtesies of social life. Yesterday he would have declaimed loudly about personal liberty ; his right to be clothed or unclothed according to his pleasure. But to-day he thinks not of himself only, but of his fellow-men.

II. *He is “in his right mind.”* He was previously wrong-minded as to all important things. God was not in all his thoughts. Immortality

was nothing to him ; he lived for the present hour. His philosophy was: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." As to the beauty of holiness, this was repugnant to him. He was accustomed to think of religion as mere sanctimoniousness—a straight-laced melancholy. Perhaps he had seen it misrepresented in the lives of professed religionists, and he had no desire for it. Now he longs for holiness ; it seems the most delightsome thing in the world to him. And then as to the person and character of Christ. If he knew Christ at all, it was only to hate and despise Him. He was "a root out of a dry ground," and there was "no form or beauty in Him," that this man should desire Him. Now there is no other in the universe so dear as Jesus. No other face like His ; the chiefest among ten thousand, and the One altogether lovely.

And with respect to duty. Duty ! What had he formerly to do with duty ? Now it is the principal thing. Duty is destined henceforth to be the largest word in his vocabulary—larger than sympathy, larger than honour, larger than pleasure, larger than life. This conviction marks the beginning of the spiritual life. "What wilt Thou have me to do ?" cried Saul of Tarsus, under the great sun-burst from heaven. Let me be with

Thee, cries the demoniac of Gadara. Let me sit at Thy feet as a disciple ; let me follow in Thy steps. "Nay," said Jesus ; "go down to thy home, and tell thy friends how great things the Lord hath done for thee."

III. *At home.* This man wanted to go with Jesus ; but there were reasons why he could accomplish more in the narrow circle of his acquaintances than by joining the group of followers who accompanied Christ in His missionary work.

The home-coming of this saved man was most pathetic. It may be that an old mother had for years been praying for his return and hoping against hope. God bless the dear faithful mothers who never give up their wayward sons and daughters, who never forget the covenant, and never lose hope ! There she sat, her withered hands folded in her lap, when he stood in the doorway. Who shall tell the gladness in her heart ? Who shall paint the brightness in her dimmed eyes ? It would appear that a wife awaited him. Time was when at the altar she passed with him under an arch of flowers out into the joys and cares of wedded life. He had promised to love, honour, and protect her. But as time passed there came a cooling of love, neglect, a remaining from home far into the night, a returning with red eyes and

angry words, and oh ! the horrible breath of the wine cup. Then one night, when he did not return at all ! Where had he gone ? Some of the neighbours had seen him out in the tombs yonder, gashed and bleeding and muttering to himself. On stormy nights she lay awake and thought of him. God be praised for conjugal life ; the love of the faithful wife that weathers all gales ; the patience of hopeful wives that holds fast to early vows and the memory of former joys and the hope of a better time coming. He sees her standing yonder by the door. "Wife, I've come back," he says. "I've come back to begin again. I've seen Jesus of Nazareth, and He has cast out the demons. I've come back to you and the children ; to life and God." And his children, how they dreaded his approach ! They knew his savage ways. They had been accustomed to run and hide when he drew near, waving his hands and uttering his angry blasphemies. Now they stand at a distance awe-struck and wondering ; they had never seen it on this fashion. "Come here," he says, "little daughter, I will not hurt you" ; and the eldest reluctantly approaches. He parts her hair from her forehead, and with sad, loving words makes his confession : "I've been a bad father, dear ; but I've met Jesus of Nazareth,

and the demons are gone." His other children sidle near, wondering. At what? At the same mystery of regeneration which puzzles the older people. And they allow themselves to be taken upon his knees. He kisses them one by one, and the past is gone.

Up yonder on the wall is a chain hanging. "Let us take it down, good wife. Please God, you shall never call in the neighbours to bind me again." And as he looks this way there is something glistening on his cheek—a strong man's tear. Aye; and there is a rainbow of promise in it. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." So the new life begins. There are scars on the man's face, his cheeks are still white and thin, and he will long carry about with him the marks of that awful nightmare in the tombs. But here with wife and children about him, ah, this is heaven begun on earth!

Is that all? Oh! no. On the evening of that day he gathers his wife and children about him, and tells them the whole story, how it all happened. How he saw the little boat upon the lake, and ran down with curses to meet it. How the strong Man looked who, standing in the bow of the little boat, boldly faced him. How, with a

ring of conscious power in His voice, He uttered those words, "Come out of him!" And then the awful struggle for a moment, when life and death tugged for the mastery within him; and how life won. "The Lord bade me," he continues, "return here to the old home and live down my past, and do good as I may have opportunity, by a holy and helpful life. But I can't do that without prayer. I am helpless and hopeless except as I have strength from above. Let us kneel down, therefore, and pray, 'Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving kindness; and according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.'" A long pause, and then: "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities, and redeemeth thy life from destruction. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us. Bless the Lord, ye His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening to His voice. Bless the Lord, all His works in all places of His

dominion : bless the Lord, O my soul!" And thus the changed man has changed his poverty-stricken home into the very gate of heaven. There may have been no tapestries or pictures there ; little meal in the barrel, or oil in the cruse ; but there was love and there was the family altar. It was like the house of Obed-edom with the ark of the covenant in the midst of it.

And was that all ? The next morning his neighbours dropped in to see ; old friends who had known him in earlier and better days ; some who had joined in his revels and tarried with him long at the wine. And they marvelled. His earnest face, his evident sincerity, his interest in their welfare, won for him a hearing. There was no gainsaying his word. He told his simple story, keeping Jesus always in the centre of it. He was never weary of sounding the praises of his Friend. "He published throughout the whole city what Jesus had done for him."

Nor was that all. One chapter more remains. So far as we are aware, this man never saw Jesus again. Nor did the Master ever return to Gadara. The people, immediately after this miracle, and before they knew its whole bearing, had implored Him to depart out of their coasts. It was a dreadful thing to do on the impulse of the

moment. And He had gone. They stood and watched the little boat as it crossed the lake, and knew not what they were losing. Farewell, O Christ; Saviour, Helper, Friend of sinners—farewell! The little boat has vanished, and the light of a great possibility has gone with it.

Nay, not wholly so; for Christ in leaving had provided for the need of these Gadarenes in His instructions to this man. He required him to abide among them a living epistle respecting His power to save. He was true to that commission, and went about doing good, preaching the gospel in his humble way; and at length he fell on sleep. One moment he closed his eyes on earth; the next he opened them in heaven. Yonder on the throne sat One like unto the Son of Man. O light and glory unapproachable! He was the same, yet not the same. His hands were stretched out in welcome, and the demoniac fell down before Him, as once before he had fallen before Him at the lake-shore, and cried: "O Jesus of Nazareth, let all heaven hear! I am the demoniac of Gadara. I am he that dwelt among the tombs. I am he that broke the silence of the night with cries of blasphemy, and Thou didst restore me to hope, and manhood, and life. Thou art worthy to receive honour and glory and power and

dominion ; for Thou hast brought me into the land of everlasting peace ! ”

And this is the gospel which I preach unto you, the gospel of a glorious salvation, of a Christ able to save sinners of the deepest dye—a mighty gospel ; to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness ; but to them which believe, the wisdom and the power of God !

THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS

“The book of the generation of Jesus Christ.”—*Matt.* i. 1.

THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS

IT is a significant fact that the genealogy of Jesus is given twice in the Gospels—to wit, by St. Matthew and St. Luke. We think it dry reading—this catalogue of names variously spelled and not easy to pronounce ; but there is a sufficient reason for it.

“ All Scripture given by inspiration is profitable.” We readily concede this as applied to certain favourite portions of Holy Writ, such as the twenty-third Psalm, the story of a pilgrim coming out of the wilderness leaning on his Beloved ; the fifty-third of Isaiah, a splendid foregleam of the coming of Messias ; the fourteenth of John, the home-bringing of God’s children ; the thirteenth of first Corinthians, “ Now abideth faith, hope, and charity, these three : but the greatest of these is charity ” ; the fifteenth of first Corinthians, life and immortality brought to light. But the statement applies with equal force to all other portions of Scripture ; and notably to this

genealogical table, which is as dry as Homer's catalogue of ships.

I. We may learn from this genealogical table that *the Christian religion centres in a Personality*. At this point it is differentiated from all other religions. Observe,

(1) It does not principally consist in a creed ; that is to say, a system of formulated truths. It must not be inferred from this, however, that doctrines are unimportant.

(2) Neither does our religion place its fundamental emphasis upon a moral code. It offers indeed the only perfect ethical system in the world ; consisting, in brief, of the Decalogue and the Sermon on the Mount ; the latter being Christ's exposition of the former. No man can be a true follower of Christ without recognizing the importance of these rules of conduct and adjusting his life and character to them.

Nevertheless, the heart of Christianity is deeper than this. Buddhism boasts of an elaborate system called "The Noble Eight-fold Path" ; touching every possible or conceivable relation of human life. But it begins and ends in selfishness. There is no spiritual uplift in it.

(3) Nor shall we find the essence of Christianity in ritual. The teaching of our Lord Jesus is very

distinct upon this point. He denounced the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees because, while outwardly blameless and most scrupulous as to the observance of the rites and ceremonies, they were quite devoid of inward spiritual life. He took occasion to wipe out of existence, with a wave of His hand, the whole ceremonial system of the Old Economy, on the ground that it was fulfilled in the Gospel. In so doing, He preserved the memory of that system, with all that it contained of value, in two simple sacraments—namely, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. And in establishing these sacraments—the former to take the place of all purifications, the latter of all sacrifices—He was careful to prescribe the utmost simplicity in their observance. We, therefore, recognize the importance of these rites, but only in their proper place as incidental to the great underlying and indwelling life of Christianity.

This life of Christianity is in *a personal relation of the soul with Jesus Christ*. He is Alpha and Omega; the first and last letters of the alphabet of life and character. He is the beginning of all high purpose and splendid hope; the end of all true ambition and holy endeavour. He is first, last, midst, and all in all.

II. We learn again from this genealogical table

that *Jesus, as the living centre of Christianity, was "very Man of very Man."*" He was of common blood and lineage with those whom He came to redeem. We shall find His divinity brought out clearly in other portions of Scripture as "very God of very God"; but at this point the distinct emphasis is put upon the fact that He took part of our human nature. And this it would appear was necessary to the accomplishment of His work.

God might have revealed Himself indeed in angelic form, as when He stood before Joshua with drawn sword announcing Himself as Captain of the host. He might possibly have manifested His Divine glory without the intervention of fleshly form. He might have withdrawn the curtains of heaven and appeared in glory, seated upon His throne. But in that event men, corrupted by sin and disabled for such bright visions, would have fled affrighted before Him, calling upon the rocks and the hills to cover them. He might possibly have come as the Gnostics and Docetists thought, as the mere inhabitant of a fleshly form without the assumption of human nature—a theophany whose human appearance was a mere phantom. But this is not the doctrine of the incarnation. The fact of the incarnation is that God so assumed a fleshly body as that Godhood and manhood

were blended into a single personality, woven in warp and woof of the Theanthropic Christ.

It is not easy to conceive how otherwise He could so have entered into fellowship with humanity as to accomplish its deliverance from sin. It is said of Warren Hastings that he lived only to repair the lost fortunes of his family. He was the son of a village clergyman. As a lad he stood in the doorway of his father's house and looked out on the vast estate as far as his young eyes could see, and remembered that these had belonged to his fathers. He resolved then that he would yet be Hastings of Daylesford ; and through all his long life he pursued that resolution with dauntless will and courage. Macaulay says : " When under a tropical sun he ruled over fifty millions of Asiatics, his hopes, amid all the cares of war, finance, and legislation, still pointed to Daylesford. And when his long public life, so singularly checkered with good and evil, with glory and obloquy, had at length closed for ever, it was to Daylesford that he returned to die." So the only begotten Son of God entered into fellowship with us that He might retrieve the fortunes of the family name. He purposed to buy back the heritage which was ours by birth, but had been squandered through sin. He took our

name, He assumed our blood, in order that He might become our Daysman. He became flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone; taking not on Him the nature of angels, but of men. He paid the ransom price on Calvary, and restored the glory of man.

III. It is made to appear from this genealogical list that *Jesus was of noble ancestry*. It need scarcely be said that this was not for the mere purpose of blazoning His name. There is no more frivolous business in this world than tuft-hunting.

“Honour and shame from no condition rise,
Act well your part—there all the honour lies.”

There was, however, a special reason for establishing the legitimacy of Jesus. An inheritance was involved and the succession to a throne. If Jesus is to be recognised as the Messiah, three points must be distinctly shown.

First. He must be in the direct line of David. The promise given to David was that the sovereignty should abide in his family until the coming of Emmanuel, in whom the ultimate hope of Israel should be fulfilled. In this genealogy it is made to appear that Jesus was the Son of David.

Second. It must be shown that He was descended in an unbroken line from Abraham. For the covenant with Abraham was this: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." At this point also the Messianic claim of Jesus is unimpeached and unimpeachable; He is the Son of Abraham.

Third. As He is to be a universal Saviour and King of the whole human race, His lineage must be traced to Adam. This also is made clear. He vindicates His title as Son of Man.

IV. There are some names in this lineage which are obviously no better than they ought to be. Here is Ruth, a Moabitess; outside of the commonwealth of Israel and belonging to a people forbidden to enter God's house unto the tenth generation. Here is Rahab, the harlot, and of the abominable seed of the Canaanites. Here is Bath-sheba, the wife of Uriah, co-partner with David in his dreadful sin. Here is Ahaz, a gross idolater, who required his own children to pass through the fires. Here is Manasseh, who was transported to Babylon to wear out, in a shameful bondage, the penalty of his misdeeds. Here is Amon, one of the very basest of kings, who was murdered by his servants.

Strange links these in the genealogical chain of

the Messiah! Why are these incorporated here?

(1) Perhaps to teach that he who would establish his birthright must take the units of succession as they come. Those who are beggars of the past cannot be choosers of their blood. We would probably be slow to utter Burns' words:

“My ancient but ignoble blood
Has crept through scoundrels ever since the flood.”

Nevertheless it is greatly to be doubted if there is a living man who can trace his lineage backward without discovering any taint of dishonour. And even at this point Jesus, as the Son of Man, became our Fellow.

(2) It means, moreover, that wicked people have a place in the Divine economy. They cannot block the Divine purpose, but are used and overruled so as to accomplish God's glory. Some of our young Endeavourers have recently united in prayer for one of our notorious infidels. The wisdom of so doing is called in question. No promise is given that prayer shall be answered for the gratification of a whim. One soul is of no more value than another soul. Nevertheless, all prayer is answered as God deems wisest and best. He forced Sennacherib to serve His own great purpose and said, “I will put My hook in

his nose, and My bridle in his lips, and will lead him back by the way that he came." No doubt some of those who are named in this genealogical table of Jesus would have been glad, if the matter had been submitted to them, to prevent the coming of the Christ. But they were not consulted. God simply used them. They had a place in His general plan. "He maketh the wrath of men to praise Him."

(3) The occurrence of these names gives us also to understand that no man is a mere creature of heredity or circumstance. Heredity is indeed a momentous fact, but it is not entitled to a small fraction of the importance which is assigned to it in moral and material therapeutics. A man is arrested for theft and brought before our civil courts ; his attorney searches among his ancestors and discovers that some of them were guilty of theft, and immediately enters this fact as an extenuating plea ; and his client is cleared as a kleptomaniac. He is not a kleptomaniac ; he is a thief. A man acquires the drinking habit and disgraces himself ; a search is made among his pedigree, and it is discovered that he has inherited his taste for liquor ; so he is pronounced a dipsomaniac. He is not a dipsomaniac, but a plain drunkard.

The fact is that if the taint of ancestral blood could be justly entered as an extenuation for ill-doing, we should all be exculpated.

But, blessed be God, we have in the grace of Jesus Christ power over both heredity and environment, and the test of true manhood is to prove one's self superior to them.

V. The length of this genealogical table marks the fulness of time. There is not a name too few or too many. It was said by Napoleon that the Austrians were defeated at the battle of Rivoli "because they were not on the minute." God is never too early, never too late. He never hurries, yet is He not slack concerning His promise.

The time represented by this succession of names was some thousands of years. Meanwhile the world was waiting for Christ. The hearts of the faithful were agonizing for His advent. How long, O Lord? how long? But there were reasons for this long delay.

A three-fold preparation was necessary for the coming of the Christ.

The Jews, as the chosen people, were entrusted with the work of leavening the nations with monotheism; and they were doing it. The Greeks must perfect themselves in the philosophic method, and must formulate a language for the

expression of spiritual truths; and they were doing it. The Romans must conquer the earth and cast up an highway for the coming of the King; and they were doing it. The roads which were built to the remotest corners of the earth were supposed to be for the convenience of Cæsar and his armies, but in God's purpose they were for the coming of Messiah and the speeding of His messengers with the tidings of life. As soon as this three-fold preparation had been accomplished, the signal was given and the angels sang their advent song: "Glory to God in the highest; peace on earth, good will toward men."

All history—from chaos to the Christian era—Eden, the Deluge, the Confusion of Tongues, the Egyptian bondage, the Deliverance, the Conquest of the Promised Land; rural life, pastoral life, city life, royalty, yeomanry, handicraft, braincraft, statecraft; Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Rome; legend, tradition, chronicle—all history passes before us, in this genealogical table, on its way toward Bethlehem, where it finds in the Christ-child the consummation of all.

The most extensive river course on earth is the Amazon, which rises among the Andes and, flowing along a channel of about four thousand miles, empties itself just under the Equator into the sea.

Its current is perceptible two hundred miles out in the ocean, and the tides are felt through an upward course of four thousand miles. It waters a valley of not less than two million five hundred thousand square miles. In all that area there is not a river, not a brook, not a fountain gushing from the hills which does not pour itself into the Amazon and flow onward into the sea. In like manner all the history of the early ages—its war and peace, its vicissitudes of men and nations—lead up to the coming of the Christ.

VI. *The name of Jesus marks the end of the family line.* He suffered the greatest sorrow that could befall a son of Israel in that He lived and died a childless man. So it was prophesied: "He shall be taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? For He shall be cut off out of the land of the living." Had He then no posterity? No sons or daughters?

Read on in the prophecy: "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, *He shall see His seed*, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." Children? O yes; an innu-

merable multitude. The old lineage was indeed cut off; but *Anno Domini* marks the divisional point in the history of the race. A new family line begins. Jesus is the Refounder of humanity, the second Adam, the Firstborn among many brethren.

It is our privilege—and higher privilege there cannot be—to belong to the new family line which was thus begun in Jesus the Christ. It is recorded that on one occasion, when He was preaching and a great multitude were gathered about Him, a message was brought: “Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without desiring to speak with Thee.” It was at a critical time in His ministry; these kinsmen loved Him; they perceived that He was involving Himself in danger, and were deeply perplexed and anxious for Him. They would save Him from impending evil and bring Him back, if possible, to the quiet of His Nazareth home. But it was too late. The die was cast; the Rubicon had been crossed. The shadow of Calvary was over Him. They had never quite understood His mission—how He must be about His Father’s business. He could not, therefore, hearken to them at this juncture. His words were: “Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My mother, My brother, My sister.”

What does this mean? Blood is indeed thicker than water; but there is no earthly bond of consanguinity so strong or precious as that which binds together those who believe in Christ and follow Him. This mystic bond is set forth in the parable of the vine and the branches; we dwell in Christ, and Christ dwelleth in us. He is not ashamed to call us brethren. We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bone. In Him we are received by adoption into that great household which finds its shibboleth of unity in those sweet words, "Abba Father." "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be." How all personal kinship dwindles in view of this glorious truth! Far better to be of this lineage than of the line royal. Far better to inherit its wealth than that of all earth's multi-millionaires. Sons of God! "And if sons, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ," to "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

ARMAGEDDON

“And He gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.”—*Rev. xvi. 16.*

ARMAGEDDON

IT would be foreign to our purpose to enter into the controversy as to the precise location of Armageddon. Place is neither here nor there. The important point is, that there is to be ultimately somewhere a great decisive conflict between the powers of good and evil; the outcome of which will be the complete overthrow of the Prince of Darkness, and the undisputed reign of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

There is a considerable number of eminently good people who believe that the world is going from bad to worse, that the Church is being more and more honeycombed with worldliness, and that the present order of things will end in a shipwreck, out of which a few superexcellent saints will escape like the crew at Melita, "on boards and broken pieces of the ship." But the great majority of Christians do not share in this melancholy outlook. They are not unmindful of the fact that the Evil One clings with a tenacious grip to his

dominion ; but they clearly see that there has been a sure, constant, uninterrupted progress in truth and righteousness from the beginning of the Christian era, and they have faith to believe that the Sun of Righteousness will shine upon this sin-stricken world brighter and brighter until the perfect day.

For right is right, since God is God ;
And right the day must win ;
To doubt would be disloyalty,
To falter would be sin.

But why, it is asked, has not God arrested the power of evil ? Why did He not long ago put an end to the dominion of the Prince of Darkness ? For the same reason that a surgeon allows a felon to come to a head before he lances it. God does nothing except in "the fulness of time."

A cursory glance at current events will make it appear that the malignant forces at work on earth are growing more and more desperate, and are displaying themselves in most hateful and abominable forms. It is this very fact which will precipitate the ultimate conflict, and put a final end to the power of the Evil One. The Prophet Daniel says that the end of the present æon is to be marked as "a time of trouble."

To this event all history has been tending

through the centuries, and the Prince of Darkness is hastening it by his desperate designs. He is fulfilling the prophecy that evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse. As truth and righteousness increase in potency, so much the more does "the beast" oppose them; he is ever doing his worst and utmost to interrupt the calm progress of Christ. When the tension has reached its last degree, then will come Armageddon. The ultimate demonstration of evil on earth will be like that of the unclean spirit, of which it is written: "He tare the man before he came out of him."

In pursuance of this thought, it will be profitable to mark the manifestations of evil in these last days; and then on the other hand to observe some of the sure tokens of the triumph of Christ.

1. Let us note at the outset *the aggravated forms of Avarice which prevail in these days*. This is the Drama of the Street. You may stand upon the corner anywhere and perceive it in the restless eye, the wrinkled brow, the eager step of those who pass by. It is not to be observed merely in the increased power of grasping monopolies; it is not the sin of the rich alone; but the humbler people, handicraftsmen, the very beggars with

their hands stretched out, are addicted to it. The horse leech's daughters are everywhere crying, "Give! Give!"

At this moment seven thousand Jews in this city are suffering from a "lockout"; Jews from Bohemia, Servia, Roumania, Russia—thin, haggard, hungry, patient toilers, who beg for the privilege of working ten hours a day, with their needles, for one dollar or less. All that they want is enough to keep body and soul together. And why not? Because there are middlemen—"sweaters"—of their own kith and kin who, unmindful of their ancestral laws as to oppression, are grinding the life out of these poor men.

Here is but a symptom of an awful malady which affects the race. The scramble for wealth is universal, with all its attending selfishness and brutality. There never has been a time in history when it was more malignant or more manifest than just now.

2. Observe also *the defiant front of Intemperance in our time*. It is organized anarchy; an open and flagrant defiance of all law, human and divine. It is the enemy of our home-life, our social life, our political life. It devours the wealth of our republic at the rate of one billion two hundred million dollars per annum. It consumes the

wages of a vast multitude of our working men, depriving their families of the common means of livelihood, and exposing them to unspeakable shame and distress. An employer in this vicinity, in order to test the question as to what proportion of his workmen's wages was squandered in drink, recently paid his hands on Saturday night in marked bills. The total amount which they received was seven thousand dollars, of which four thousand one hundred dollars was passed into the hands of rum sellers by those who received it. Who shall portray the want and sorrow involved in that fact! Just now it is stated that the liquor men of the State of New York have contributed a large sum of money wherewith to influence the legislation of the Assembly which is about to convene. They can afford to do it, for this Legislature is arranging to amend our Excise Laws. These are mere intimations of the desperate power of this organized evil. It was never so brazen, never so defiant, since the beginning of time.

3. *As to Sensuality.* We recall with horror how the Virgin Mary was torn from her shrine above the high altar in Notre Dame in the Reign of Terror, to give place to a courtesan, to whom were paid divine honours. But was that worse than the movement in behalf of uncleanness which we

observe in our social life to-day? Look into the books upon your table. Run down the amusement column of the newspapers, and see how lust, passion, carnality, are holding revel in these days.

4. Another of the current forms of malignant evil is *Bibliophobia, or hatred of the Scriptures as the Word of God.* This is the fashionable form of infidelity. God is no longer denied; atheism is out of fashion. Christ is no longer rejected; no, fulsome adulation of Christ is the order of the day. The Church is no longer assailed; the Church is a great institution, a splendid organism for humanitarian effort. But the Scriptures, which are the very citadel of the Christian religion, are assailed with unparalleled fury; and the worst of this movement is, that its force comes from within the Church of God.

It is said that Agamemnon, King of Greece, besieged Troy for ten weary years without avail; then making a wooden horse, he filled its capacious belly with armed men, and introduced it into the beleaguered city; the bolts were drawn, and Troy fell. It is by a similar stratagem that the enemy assails the stronghold of Christianity to-day. Wheel in the Trojan horse—into the pulpit, into the theological chair, into the Sabbath school, into the Christian home. In this manner

the Adversary hopes to destroy the power of the Word of God.

5. *Sabbath Desecration.* Here again the assault upon the power of the Christian religion is in most specious and malignant form ; and it comes not from without, but from within the Church. We view with consternation the covert assault made upon the American Sabbath in our legislatures by propositions to legalize various forms of labour and amusement, as well as the rum traffic, on that day. But the real danger lies in the sentiment of Christian people. There is an outcry against the Puritan Sabbath. There is a disposition to hold that the requirements of the Fourth Commandment are met by a cessation of toil. "Why should we not have the Continental Sabbath, in which men and women lend themselves to the pleasures of the drama and musical entertainment?"

It should be remembered, however, that the Divine law calls not merely for rest from labour, but also from doing our own pleasure on the Lord's day. Are we to conclude that we have wrought a real deliverance of our labouring classes from the bondage of their secular life, when we have liberated them from the workshop, only to let them loose into the dissipations of the wine-

shop and the beer garden, there to squander their earnings, which should be given to the replenishing of the oil in the cruse and the meal in the barrel? Nay, it were far better if men were required to toil seven days in every week, and three hundred and sixty-five days in every year. Far better never to rest, rather than to rest in pleasures and dissipations which destroy the real sanctions and all the just benefits of the Sabbath. The Fourth Commandment begins with the word, "Remember"; this suggests the danger of forgetting. In this new phase of Christian sentiment, with respect to the Sabbath, we observe again the craft and the desperation of the Power of Evil.

6. *As to Persecution.* We thought that the days of persecution had gone by; but we have lived to see in this Nineteenth Century of boasted Christian civilization, such an outburst of malignant hatred against Christianity as the world never witnessed. It is estimated that one hundred thousand of the Armenians are slain and thousands more reduced to beggary. Nero kindling his living torches, the bones of the Waldenses "scattered on the Alpine mountains cold," the horrors of St. Bartholomew's day, are outdone. And while all this is going on the great Christian

powers of Europe stand idly by. Not a hand is uplifted to save the persecuted nation from this fiendish violence.

7. War. The most horribly repulsive of the dragon's heads is war. We have been saying all along that because of the developments of Christian civilization, war between the great nations of the earth was impossible. Yet how near we have been to it! A war that would have set the two greatest of Christian nations against each other. A war in which probably all the important governments of Europe would have been directly or indirectly involved, as well as the lesser governments of America.

We have spoken of the forces of evil at work for the disturbance of men and nations. These are foretokens of Armageddon. The tension grows tighter and tighter. The signal may be given at any moment that will plunge the nations into an universal conflict. There is a moment in the history of a snow-drift on the Alps when the mighty mass is poised for its plunge. The bleating of a lost kid, the scream of an eagle, the scurrying of a rodent from its hole may disturb the mass; and then the avalanche!

Let us turn now to the brighter side. If the beast has been manifesting his power in a des-

perate effort to retain the dominion of the world, the Lamb, the champion of truth and righteousness, has not been inactive. The world has been growing better constantly, and Christ has been distancing His foe. It will be sufficient, without entering into detail as to the various manifestations of the power of the gospel, to indicate a few points which mark the certain triumph of Christ.

I. The Scriptures as Divine truth have a deeper hold than ever on the hearts of Christian people. It has not been for nothing that all the powers of adverse criticism in the Church and outside of it have been brought to bear for years upon the Word. The lights have been turned on. The knife of destructive criticism has been ruthlessly applied to the Book. The corrosive acid of irreverence has been poured over its pages. And the Scriptures have come forth out of the fierce ordeal as gold seven times tried. No praise to those who have assailed the oracles; God hath made the wrath of men to praise Him.

It is as when the Philistines carried away the Ark of the Covenant from the battle of Ebenezer. They brought it into the house of Dagon, and on the next morning, lo, Dagon had fallen on his face before it. They replaced their idol upon its

pedestal ; and on the next morning again he had fallen upon his face, and his head and the palms of his hands were cut off. In capturing this symbol of the Divine presence, the Philistines were now beginning to realize that they had undertaken more than they could manage. In their city of Ashdod the people were afflicted with a painful malady. Their homes were filled with shame and misery, so that the cry of the city went up to heaven. The Ark of the Covenant was too much for them. What should they do with it? They sent it back to Israel.

In like manner God has been pleased to bring to naught the machinations of men who hope to overthrow His Word. The old Book is cherished as it never was cherished before ; is studied more earnestly ; is believed in more cordially. "The Word of the Lord is tried." It has been vindicated, triumphantly vindicated, as a true volume from beginning to end. In this we behold a token of God's special providence ; for what can His Church do without the Scriptures? It is vain to contend with the adversary unless we can hold in our right hand the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.

2. Christ is served in His Church more loyally and effectively than ever. We have a new con-

ception of Church membership to-day. The time was when to be a member of the Church meant little more than a name on the register, an interest in social communion, a sense of salvation from death, and then to "sit and sing one's self away to everlasting bliss."

But a mighty change has transpired. To-day Church membership means, above all, an individual responsibility for service. We are living in an epoch of organizations within the Church ; the men, the women, the young people, the children, are banded together in leagues and committees and associations ; the object of which is to assign a specific duty to every one.

In the days of Nehemiah the rebuilders of the wall toiled with weapon in one hand and trowel in the other ; heeding not the taunts of Sanballat and Tobiah, since all alike were concerned in doing a great work, "and could not come down." The secret of the success of those rebuilders is recorded in the words, "*So built we the wall.*" In like manner the disciples of Christ are beginning to understand the importance of working each over against his own place.

The various denominations of believers are agreed as to essentials, tolerant as to non-essentials, and cordial in co-operating for the advance-

ment of the kingdom. The cry for Church union has given way to a more reasonable insistence on Christian union. There is indeed more of unity among the denominations to-day than there is between the various parties in the Roman Catholic Church, or between the divisional sects in the Anglican Church. For this we praise God and take courage. We are approaching a realization of the dream of Wesley, "All at it, always at it, altogether at it."

3. The personality and power of the Holy Ghost are recognised in the Church as never before. We have a new conception of the Holy Spirit. It is not many years since the substance of controversy was Christological. To-day we are dwelling on the importance of honouring the Holy Ghost.

It is recorded that on a certain occasion Paul coming to Ephesus found a company of believers to whom he said, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" They answered, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." Whereupon he laid his hands upon them, conferring the unspeakable gift, and straightway they began to speak with tongues and prophesied. It will be a great day for the Christian Church when the truth as to the Holy Spirit shall pervade all hearts.

We are living in the dispensation of the Holy Ghost. We are working under His supervision for the building up of the kingdom of Christ. The Bible is a meaningless book until He illuminates its pages, and touches our eyes that we may read and understand it. Christ is a mystery until He takes of the things of Jesus and shows them unto us. True service is out of the question until He quickens, enables, and directs us. This is pre-eminently the age of the Holy Ghost, and by the same token it is the epoch of missionary progress. We are living among the miracles of missions. Under the guidance of the Holy Ghost an army of messengers are going out in all directions to declare the riches of the Gospel and are meeting with unprecedented successes. This means Christ for the world, and the world for Christ.

So have the two forces of good and evil been moving onward toward the final struggle and the consummation of all things. The times are ripe for momentous events. As the Nineteenth Century draws towards its close we find that, while wickedness grows worse and worse unto desperation, the Lord's army is more and more mobilized for the last march and the perpetual triumph. While the followers of Christ have been lament-

ing the slow advance of His Gospel, He has been all along the centuries unceasingly accomplishing a splendid progress. The sun never sets on His dominions. The dream of Tennyson is almost realized when the earth shall be every way "bound as with gold chains about the feet of God."

It is not for us to speak definitely as to times and seasons, but when the signal shall be given for the last conflict, and all nations shall have done their part at Armageddon, the lifting smoke will disclose a conclusive and perfect victory. Then the tabernacle of God shall come down among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be their God.

IN THE GARDEN

“Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.”—*John xviii. 3.*

IN THE GARDEN

ON a moonlight night, in a garden just outside the walls of Jerusalem, was gathered the most historic group that ever came together on earth. If the Czar of Russia, Queen Victoria, the Mikado, the Emperor of China, the War Lord of Germany, and the President of the United States, were all to meet in conference, they would not form such an historic assemblage as this. The central figure in this group is Jesus of Nazareth, claiming to be Emmanuel—that is, “God with us.” He bears no outward mark to distinguish Him from other men, and yet all the great problems of subsequent centuries were destined to revolve about Him. He has just come from a stupendous struggle under the shadow of the olive trees, where the purple cup of death was pressed to His lips ; the marks of that conflict are still upon Him. Near by are John and James, the Sons of Thunder ; Peter, the Man of Rock ; and the other disciples, with a single exception. One is missing ; where is he ?

On the same memorable night the door of the high priest's palace in Jerusalem was flung open, and a strange company issued from it. In front was Judas, the missing one of the twelve ; then came scribes, members of the Sanhedrin, soldiers and others. They were armed with swords and staves, and carried lanterns ; for, though it was the time of the paschal moon, they were going to the heights beyond the Kedron to search for a malefactor, and there were many lurking-places there. As this company passed along the streets they were joined by many of the people ; they passed out at the north gate, down into the dark valley of the Kedron, with the moon shining on their faces, until they reached the garden. Here let us pause and observe them ; for they constitute a typical company of the enemies of Christ. We have their counterpart in these days.

I. *Judas, the man of Kerioth.* He has no friends. There are indeed those who would mitigate his guilt by representing that he simply wished, in the betrayal of Christ, to precipitate the setting up of His earthly throne ; but there is nothing in this. He was a wilful, deliberate betrayer of his Lord ; a rebel against the truth and righteousness of the kingdom of God. In brief, he was a hypocrite. The word means,

"under a mask." A hypocrite is not one who unwittingly deceives himself and others, but one who, like Judas, steals the livery of heaven to serve the devil in. The punishment is measured by the guilt. Dante leads us down through his series of hells until he comes to the deepest, darkest place of torture, the sea of ice, where he shows us Judas transfixed in unimaginable pain.

We may not penetrate the mysteries of the unseen world as boldly as the poet does; but we recall the significant words of Jesus, "It were better for that man had he never been born." For the better understanding of that word, let us see Judas in the hall Gazith, bargaining, under the malignant inspiration of envy and covetousness, to deliver his Lord for thirty pieces of silver. Let us see him a little later, when his treason had been consummated, returning to the temple, his face distorted with a tragic remorse, flinging down at the feet of the rabbis those blood-stained pieces of silver, with the cry: "I have betrayed innocent blood!" Let us then go out to the cliff above the Valley of Hinnom, and see his body swinging from yonder tree in the night wind. So shall we, perhaps, gain a measurable apprehension of the significance of

that sentence, "It were better for him had he never been born."

And the lesson is sincerity. Let us be true to our convictions. "To counterfeit is death." Let us be what we seem to be. Lord Bacon says, "An ill man is always ill, but he is worst who pretends to be a saint." The original meaning of the word sincere is said to be, "tried by the sun." Honesty is transparency. Let us see that all our graces are translucent, inasmuch as presently we must stand in our true character in the light of the countenance of God.

II. Close after Judas follow *the Rabbis*. And what an opportunity was theirs! They were the religious teachers who, having special charge of the oracles, should have been familiar with Messianic prophecy. They were the leaders of the people, the makers of public sentiment. At this juncture it would appear, had they been so disposed, they might have swung all Jewry into line with the redemptive purposes of God. But, alas! two things were in the way:

(1) Pride; the pride of intellect. They had made such acquisitions in rabbinical lore that they were unwilling to be taught by any man, and least of all by this Nazarene carpenter! They saw Him standing in Solomon's Porch

with the people gathered about Him, touching with an unparalleled boldness the great spiritual problems which had defied all the wisdom of the schools. "Is not this the son of Joseph?" they asked. "And whence hath this man letters?" "Shall He teach us?"

"A little learning is a dangerous thing ;
Drink deep or taste not the Pierian spring."

But, unfortunately for us, we cannot drink deep ; we can only at the best wet our lips at the Pierian spring. Pride ill becomes the wisest among us. "He who knows his own ignorance," said Socrates, "is on the way to knowing more." And, when we stop to reflect, how preposterous is our assumption of wisdom in the presence of the omniscient One ! The light of our intellect is as the infinitesimal spark in the eye of a snail to the glory of the noonday sun that shrivels it.

(2) Prejudice. They had their own opinions of Messiah. He must come wearing a crown, and show Himself, by outward pomp and circumstance, worthy to restore the glory to Israel. A thoughtful reference to their oracles would have corrected this misconception ; but, unfortunately, "a man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still." Prejudice is like a jaun-

diced eye: all things look yellow to it; the sea, the verdant fields, the overarching sky, all yellow, because the eye itself is so. God save us from pride and prejudice! If we would make a voyage, we must begin by hoisting the anchor. If we would attain to truth, we must cut loose from all ill-formed pre-judgments, hold ourselves open to convictions, and be willing to see.

The same Jesus who taught in Solomon's Porch is still teaching among us. He who rightly apprehends the value of wisdom and sincerely desires to acquire it, will lend a listening ear despite the confusing clamour from within and without, saying: If this be truth, I will receive it.

III. Then *the Soldiers*. There is something to be said for them; for they were under orders and accustomed to obey. Had any of them desired to befriend Christ, he would have found circumstances greatly against him. But what of that? Are not circumstances against us all?

(1) Are we not all under the constraint of heredity? The blood of long generations of sinners is in our veins; but this furnishes no excuse for ill-doing. Nero was the son of a father who drove over a beggar in Appia Via, struck out a soldier's eye in a quarrel in the forum, and killed a freedman for failing to drink

enough to please him. Thus the heir-apparent to the Roman throne inherited the disposition of a tiger; was he, then, to blame for it? Aye; greatly to blame for giving way to it. We are all alike under the curse of such inheritance. One man has intemperance running hot in his blood, another licentiousness, another avarice; and others still inherit the less conspicuous, but not less heinous, vices. A large part of the serious business of our life is to fight against our ancestors. The man who excuses himself for giving way to an evil disposition on the ground of heredity is a coward. It was bad enough for Adam to throw the blame of his transgression on his wife; it is worse and meaner for one to blame his forbears. The thing to do is to make a brave struggle and triumph over an evil heredity. And, blessed be God, this is possible; has been proven to be possible ten thousand times ten thousand times.

(2) Environment. No man finds it easy to live a righteous life, or build up a noble character. There are difficulties all about him, and obstacles ever in the way. But the mark of true greatness is to overcome them and rise above them.

One of the best men I have ever known, was born in the slums of New York, of parents who

were no better than they ought to be. His home was next door to a distillery ; and he has told me that when he was a lad of eight years, it was no uncommon thing for him to lie down under the mash tubs, where he could catch the intoxicating drippings, and be carried home by his mother at evening sodden with drink. But there came a time in his early manhood when he determined that neither heredity nor environment should get the better of him ; but that, by the grace of God, he would prove himself a man. To-day he is one of the most successful ministers of Christ.

(3) Habit. As if it were not enough that our ancestors and companions should be against us, we bind ourselves with fetters and manacles ; and true manliness becomes more and more difficult as the years pass on. But the comforting thought is that God stands ready with His sovereign and omnipotent relief, and there is no living man who cannot, thus reinforced, break these bands of habit as Samson broke the green withes wherewith they bound him. No man can excuse himself for sin by saying, "I cannot help it." By God's grace he can help it.

" . . . Toil on ;
In hope o'ercome the steeps God set for thee,
For past the Alpine summits of great toil lieth thine Italy."

No doubt the soldiers who went out against Jesus on that memorable night, would have found it difficult to resist the current of opposition to Christ; but that it was not impossible is proven by the fact that one, who was probably one of their number—the centurion to whom was assigned the task of superintending the crucifixion of Jesus—was himself convicted and convinced, and moved to say: “Verily, this was the Son of God.”

IV. Then came *the People*; a rabble made up from the multitude who are gathered from all directions to attend the feast. There were traders, shepherds, vine-dressers, camel-drivers, artisans, all sorts and conditions of men. They correspond to the lapsed masses of our time—the unchurched multitudes, who fall in impulsively with every popular movement, except that which impels toward acceptance of Divine grace in the gospel of Christ. Where is the trouble?

(1) They do not think. They do not stop to consider seriously the great problems and the verities which centre in Christ. The common sin of every age is heedlessness. “For want of a nail, the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe, the horse was lost; for want of a horse, the rider was lost; for want of a rider, the kingdom was lost.” The

average man is so busy with the common cares of life—the bread-and-butter work, the gaining of a livelihood, the winning of a competence—that the greater matters of truth and righteousness are little or nothing to him.

(2) They run with the multitude, doing as others do. When Napoleon returned from his Austrian campaign, he was received with bonfires and huzzas. One of his marshals remarking upon the devotion of the people to his cause, he replied : “Yes ; but they would follow me just as eagerly to prison and the guillotine.” And the sequel proved it. So is it ever. Those who to-day receive Christ at the city gates with shouts of “Hosanna ! Hosanna to the Son of David !” will to-morrow fall in with the rabble who cry, “Crucify Him ! crucify Him !”

Let us have the courage to stand by ourselves while the multitude surges by. Let us do our own thinking. Let us read our Bibles for ourselves with the light which the Holy Spirit gives us. Let us gaze with our own eyes at the cross, until the eye affecteth the heart, and we believe in Him. It is written that when Jesus was dying on the cross, “The people stood beholding.” The coldness of that word makes us shiver. They stood beholding with dull eyes, while the heart of

the Saviour yonder on the cross was breaking under the burden of their sins. O, if they had known! And they would have known, had they stopped to reflect, had they been willing to reason for themselves. Yet, our condemnation under like conditions is greater than theirs. "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?"

But while we have been taking counsel together, the band has entered the garden. They are peering, lantern in hand, here and there into the dense shadows. Lo, yonder He stands; pale, worn, with a forecast of the last agony upon Him. The torchlight falls weirdly on His face. "Whom seek ye?" "Jesus of Nazareth." "I am He." They lead Him away to judgment, and thence to the Cross.

The three hours of vicarious pain are over; the Galilean is dead!

Time passes; and by the banks of the Tigris, worsted in a vain struggle against the increasing power of the gospel and wounded unto death, Julian the Apostate clutches the earth and cries: "Galilean, Thou hast conquered!"

Time passes; and Constantine marching back

from Saxa-Rubra, where he won his famous victory against the old herdsman emperor, plants the banner of Jesus in the Forum at Rome.

Time passes ; and Columbus plants the banner of the Cross on the shores of the new world, christening it *San Salvador*, "Land of the Saviour."

Time passes ; and missionaries are going everywhere, their feet beautiful upon the mountains, to carry into the regions of darkness and the habitations of death the unsearchable riches of the gospel of Christ.

Time passes ; and the world grows brighter and brighter, and the day approaches when the clouds above shall part asunder, and He whose right it is to reign, shall come to be king over all and blessed for ever. In that day His faithful friends shall rejoice at His appearing, and they that pierced Him shall behold Him. Let us be getting ready, friends, for the coronation !

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